THROUGH WELSH DOORWAYS

JEANNETTE MARKS

Geo 20.10

LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA.

Class 961
M346
t

Through
Welsh
Doorways

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

SHE LOOKED SHARPLY AT THE APPROACHING GROUP

(Page 18.)

Through Welsh Doorways

By

Jeannette Marks

With Illustrations by
Anna Whelan Betts

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

London
T. Fisher Unwin
Adelphi Terrace
1910

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

(*All rights reserved.*)

PS3525-
A665T5
1910
MAIN

CONTENTS

	PAGE
The Merry Merry Cuckoo	11
Mors Triumphans	27
Dreams in Jeopardy	45
Tit for Tat	77
An Oriel in Eden	97
The Child	121
An All-Hallows' Honeymoon	133
The Heretic's Wife	151
The Choice	175
A Last Discipline	203
Respice Finem	227

229888

ILLUSTRATIONS

She looked sharply at the approaching group (*page* 18) — Frontispiece

TO FACE PAGE

Janny watched Ariel's thin fingers work skilfully — 106

Betto Griffiths laughed — 112

The
Merry
Merry
Cuckoo

The Merry Merry Cuckoo

"LAD *dear*, no more or ye'll be havin' an attack, an'——"

Annie's words sounded inconclusive, although she fortified them by an animated gesture with her plump wrinkled hand. Her eyes glanced timidly from the window to David's face.

"But, Annie, ye've not said a word of the cuckoo," replied David plaintively.

"Aye, the cuckoo," said Annie, her heart sinking as she sent her voice up. "The cuckoo—"

"Has it come? Did ye hear it?"

The old man clasped and unclasped his hands helplessly, childish disappointment overspreading his face.

"David *dear*, if ye'd but listen to what I was a-goin' to say"—Annie gulped—"I was a-goin' to say that I've not heard the cuckoo yet, but that everythin' 's over early an' I'm expectin' to hear one any time now. It's so

warm there might be one singin' at dusk to-day—there might be!"

"Might there be?" asked David, his eyes brightening, "might there be, Annie?"

"Aye, there might be, lad," and she lifted his head on her arm gently while she turned the pillow.

"It's over early," he objected, "an', Annie——"

"Davie *dear*, be still," she commanded, drawing his head close to her bosom before she put him down on the pillow again. "Pastor Morris says everythin' 's over early; even the foxglove is well up in the garden; an' the heather by Blaen Cwm will be bloomin' a month early, an' the hills will be pink, lad—soon. Now, dearie, I'll be back by and by with the broth; ye must be still awhile."

Annie went out of the room stepping as softly as she could. For a moment she stood on the doorsill, looking into the old garden, green at last after the dreary winter and beautiful in the promise of coming summer blossom. Foxglove and columbine, honeysuckle, lilies and roses would bloom, but David would see them no more! For fifty springs they had gone into the garden together, he to trim the hedge and bind up the honeysuckle, she to dig about the rose-bushes and flowers. And every spring there

had been one evening when the cuckoo's song was heard for the first time and when there came into David's eyes a look of boyish joy. Ah, lad, lad, how she loved him! And he *should* hear the cuckoo again!

Resolutely Annie started up hill, climbing close by the high pasture wall, and, panting made her way as best she could over boggy places. After she had gone about a quarter of a mile she looked around her, furtively. There lay Gwyndy Bach in the distance, Ty Ceryg and Cwm Cloch far away, and the Chapel still farther. Only the mountains were near by, and a few lazy sheep trailing over their wild, grey ledges. She did not see even a sheep-dog. When she sat down by the stone-wall there was a look of approval on her face, followed, as she opened her mouth, by a look of appealing misery.

"Aye, it was somethin' like this: *coo-o.* Dear, let me see, every year I've heard it, an' David he does it. *Coo-o-o!* Tut, that sounds like a hen." Annie peered about her. "*Cu, cu,*" then she shook with silent laughter. "I know! it goes over and over again, sing-song, sing-song, like this: *cu-cu, cu-cu.* Aye, that's better." Practising the song Annie rocked herself backwards and forwards. "It's growing better!" she exclaimed, "but, lad, lad, I'm plannin' to

deceive ye"; and the tears rolled out of her old eyes. She brushed the tears away impatiently and began the song again: "*Cucu-cu, cucu-cu, cucucucu, cu;* aye, that's fair, aye, it's fine! He'll not know me from a real cuckoo. I'll have to be tryin' it now, for ye've no long, dearie."

Annie went down into the valley, humming the bird-notes over to herself lest she forget what she had learned. She lifted her short skirts and waded through the marshy places; in her eagerness she was unmindful of the pasture-bogs, her seventy years, her weary body; and her sparse grey hair lay damp on her forehead. In her mother-heart was but one thought: bringing his wish to Davie. Gasping she reached the southern corner of the cottage garden, and there leaned on a trellis for support till she could get her breath. Completely engrossed in what she was to do, she did not think to look about her, she did not listen for possible approaching footsteps, and even Davie had slipped in importance a wee bit behind the cuckoo song. Finally she drew a long breath and began; she paused a moment, then repeated the song, softly, slowly. Pleased with her success, she sang the song again, very softly, very slowly, till it sounded much as if it came from a distance somewhere by the stream near the mill wheel.

She was just beginning once more when steps rustled behind her and a voice said tauntingly: "Pooh! 'tis a pretty cuckoo ye make, Annie, an' a pretty song!"

"Lowry Prichard!"

"It's over early for the cuckoo, is it not?"

"Aye."

"An' what are ye singin' in your garden for, an' David dyin'?"

Annie's mild eyes gathered fire, but she said nothing.

"Are ye deceivin' David, an' he on the edge of the grave, Annie? 'Tis a godly song to sing, an' a tale for Chapel, eh, Annie?"

"Ye—may—go—out—of—this—garden, an' that this minute," said Annie, advancing.

Lowry backed towards the wicket.

"Ye look fair crazy, Annie, crazy with wrath, aye, and your hair is all rumpled an' your smock is wet. Bein' a cuckoo is——"

But Lowry never finished her taunt, for Annie pushed her through the wicket gate.

The old wife went towards the cottage door slowly. David must have heard Lowry's words, and she could never make him happy again.

"Annie! Annie!" Her face brightened, then fell.

"Aye, David, I'm comin'."

"Annie, did ye hear a cuckoo singin'?" David's eyes glowed rapturously in the twilight.

"Aye, I thought so, dearie."

"It sang three times; first, it sounded like somethin' else, it was so breathless; then it sang quiet and sweet like a cuckoo; an' the third time it seemed comin' from the old mill wheel. I was listenin' for it again when I heard Lowry Prichard's shrill voice an' I could hear no more."

"But, lad *dear*, ye've heard it, an' I'm that glad!" Annie beamed upon him. "Three times; aye, that's fine an' a real cuckoo; now ye're happy, dearie, an' ye'll sleep well upon it."

"Will it be singin' again?" asked David, with a sigh.

"Aye, in the early mornin' an' at dusk. Now ye must drink your broth an' go to sleep."

David drank it obediently.

"It's been a fine day, lad dear, is it not so?"

"Aye, a fine day. I did not think I'd ever hear it sing again"; and David's head slipped contentedly on to the pillow. "Aye," he murmured, "a happy day!"

At dawn Annie stole out to sing her cuckoo song. It was done quickly, and she was back among her pots and kettles before David could know that she had been away. She rattled the

saucepans around, then she stopped to listen. Yes, there he was calling.

"Aye, David, I'm comin' ; I did not hear for the noise, dearie."

"Annie, it's been singin' again !" There was an expression of eager happiness on David's wan face. "I'm a-wantin' to hear it sing over an' over again, over an' over again. But, Annie, ye make such a clatter there's no hearin' more than a song or two, an' yesterday 'twas Lowry."

"Aye, dearie, 'tis a pity I was makin' such a noise gettin' breakfast for ye."

"I was awake, Annie, when the stars were hangin' in the trees, an' I saw them go out one by one while I was a-waitin' for it to sing. I heard little creepin' things makin' way through the trees an' the grass, an' I saw the poplar by the window turn from silver to brown an' back to grey ; an' I heard the other birds makin' their early mornin' stirrin', flittin' an' chirpin' ; an' a little breeze came an' bustled through the trees with them, but no cuckoo ; an' then just as it was singin' ye began stormin' with pots an' kettles."

"I'm that sorry, Davie lad, but ye have heard it twice, dearie, an' it'll be singin' this evenin' at dusk, perhaps, over an' over again. Ye are feelin' fine this mornin', Davie ?"

"Aye, better nor yesterday mornin'; I'll be gettin' well, Annie, is it not so?"

"Indeed, lad *dear*, ye'll be about among the heather 'fore long."

Annie turned suddenly and went back into the kitchen; there in a corner she dried her eyes with her apron, drew a long breath, and went on with her household duties. She was disposing of the work rapidly when she heard the click of the wicket gate. Coming up the path were John Roberts, Peter Williams, and Lowry Prichard. Annie put down the pot she was scouring, wiped her hands on her apron, and went to the kitchen door, which, stepping outside, she closed carefully behind her. She looked sharply at the approaching group, and her kindly wrinkled face hardened. Peter Williams spoke first:—

"A fine mornin' to ye, Annie Dalben."

"Thank ye, Peter Williams, for the wish."

"How is your man?" asked John Roberts.

"He is the same," replied Annie, in a level tone of voice.

Lowry Prichard moved nearer:—

"We've come about the cuckoo-singin', Annie. At the Chapel last night the congregation prayed for ye, an' a committee was appointed to wrestle with ye."

Annie breathed quickly.

"Aye, Sister," continued Peter Williams, "ye've always been a godly member of the flock; ye would not have David go to Heaven with your lie on his soul?"

"Amen!" sang Lowry Prichard.

"An', Sister, there was light in that meetin'; the Spirit's among us these days; yours are the only lyin' lips."

"Repent!" shouted John Roberts.

"Have ye done?" asked Annie.

"But, Sister——"

"I've a word to say. I've no mind to your salvation, no, nor to Heaven if the Lord makes this singin' a lie. I'm a-thinkin' of David as I've thought of him these fifty years, an' if a lie will make him happy when he's dyin', then I'm willin' to lie, an' do it every minute of the day."

"Sinner!" muttered John Roberts.

"Aye, sinner, a willin' sinner," said Annie, her soft eyes blazing; "be gone, an' ye need not return."

Annie bolted the door and sat down wearily on a chair. She felt quiet; it mattered so little now what the neighbours thought of her if only David might die happy, and David still believed he had heard the cuckoo. She was tired, so tired that she did not care what the Chapel said of

her; and her heart was numb. She knew that David was going, but it did not come home to her in the least except to make her hungry to bring him happiness. He should have that if she could give it. At a faint call she hastened to his room.

"Annie, there's some one outside, an'——"

"Aye, David Dalben, there is, an' Annie is a cuck—"

But the sentence was never finished, for Annie forced Lowry Prichard's head back and slammed the casement to, latching it securely.

"What does she want?" asked David feebly.

"I cannot say, lad, but she's no right talkin' to ye through a window. She's an idle, pryin' young woman. I'll see now that she's out of the garden. Go to sleep, dearie, it's bad for ye havin' so much noise over nothin'; aye, that's a good lad," and Annie smoothed his brow with one hand the while she brushed aside her tears with the other.

If David should live a week longer, could she ever keep the truth from him? For a day, yes, perhaps. But for an entire week, with all Nant y Mor trying to force a way to the sick man? No. And how could she sing morning and night with the neighbours spying into the garden and around the house? She felt friendless; for

strength only the courage of a mother left alone in the world with a sick child to protect. She had no idea of relinquishing her plan, although she was in despair, and if any one had come to her with a friendly hand she would have wept. As it was, she was ready to meet attack after attack.

Annie was not surprised, later in the day, to see young Pastor Morris coming up the pathway. He came slowly. When he greeted Annie his eyes sought the ground, his complexion was ruddier and more boyish than ever, and his lips, usually firm in speech, seemed uncertain. But the large hand with which he held Annie's was warm and kind. In the clean kitchen he began to talk with Annie about David : how was David, what did the physician say, wasn't Annie growing tired, what could he do? Suddenly the young Pastor changed as if brought face to face with a disagreeable duty.

"Annie, they say that you are imitating a cuckoo; is it so?"

"Aye, sir, for David's ears."

"But, Annie, that is acting a lie, is it not?"

"It may be," replied Annie wearily.

"Wouldn't it be better if I were to tell David, Annie?"

"Oh, no, no, no!" sobbed Annie. "Not that!"

"Annie, Annie, you mustn't cry so; there!" and the young man stretched out his hand helplessly.

"Oh, sir, it's all the happiness David's got, an' he is goin'. O my lad, my lad!"

"There, there, Annie!"

"We've been married fifty years this spring, an' every spring we've listened for the cuckoo an' not one missed. An' this year he's dyin', an' he's a-wantin' to hear it so, an' it's over early. O Davie, Davie!"

"There, Annie, there, *dear*," soothed the young man; "tell me about it. We'll see, Annie."

"There's no more," said Annie, "only he kept askin' about things, violets an' cowslips an' birch-trees an' poplars, an' I knew all the time he was thinkin' of the cuckoo an' not askin' because he was goin' an' mightn't hear it. An' one day he did. An' I said I thought he'd hear one that very evenin', that everythin' was over early. Then he seemed happier than I'd seen him, an' I went off up the hill an' practised it till I could do it fair. O Davie, lad!"

"Now, Annie *dear*," comforted the young man, patting her helplessly on the back. "Annie *dear*, don't cry, just tell me more."

"Then, sir, I sang the song in the corner of the garden, an' when I went into the house there was such a look of joy on David's face that's not been there for many a month, an' it was no matter Lowry Prichard found me singin'. It's the last happiness I can give him, sir."

"I see," said the young man; "aye, Annie, I see. And you will be wishing to do it again?"

"Aye, sir, Davie's expectin' to hear the cuckoo to-night. Each time might be his last, an' I cannot disappoint him, poor lad."

"Well, Annie," said the minister, looking shyly out the window, "I'll be around the garden at dusk watching, and there'll be no one to annoy you while you are singing, so sing your best for Davie."

"Oh, sir, thank you," replied Annie, drying her tears and sighing with relief; "it's a comfort. But ye're no harmin' your conscience for me, sir, are ye?"

"I'm not saying, Annie; I'm over young to have a conscience in some things. I'll be going in to speak a few words to David, shall I?"

"Aye, sir, ye're so kind."

And so it happened that at dusk, when David's eyes were growing wider with expectation and his heart was beating for very joy of the coming song, Annie, after she had patted him in motherly

fashion, smoothed out his coverlets, called him lad *dear*, and dearie, and Davie, and all the sweet old names she knew so well how to call him—so it happened that she stole out into the garden with a lighter heart to sing than she had had in many a day. She knew the young minister was somewhere around to protect her from interruption. Standing by the honeysuckle trellis, swaying her old body to and fro, she sang. The song came again and again, low, sweet, far away, till all the hill seemed chiming with the quiet notes and echoes. And the young man listening outside to the old woman singing inside the garden knew something more of the power of love than he had known before; and he bowed his head, thinking of the merry notes and of David in the twilit room dying. Annie sang the song over and over again, then over and over again, till beyond the valley she saw the evening star hanging in the sky. Once more she sang, and all the spring was in her song. Then she turned to go into the house, her heart beating with fear. As she came through the doorway she heard her name called.

"Annie, sweetheart, did ye hear the cuckoos singin'?"

David was sitting up in bed, his hands stretched towards her.

"Aye, lad dear," replied Annie softly, taking David into her arms.

"An' there were so many, an' they sang over an' over again."

"Aye, David."

"But ye were not here, an' I'd like hearin' them better with ye here."

"Aye, dearie, I was busy."

"Oh, it was beautiful singin'—"

"Aye, lad, I know."

"An' over an' over again, like this——" But David's notes trailed away as he started to sing.

"Aye, dearie, I see."

"An' the—valley—was—quiet—but—Annie ——" The voice ceased, for a second the pulse in his throat ticked sharply against her heart, then his head settled drowsily upon her breast.

"Oh, lad, lad *dear*, Davie," called Annie, rocking him in her arms, "lad, lad *dear*, will ye not speak to me?"

And the young minister stepping in over the threshold saw that the Messenger had come.

Mors Triumphans

Mors Triumphans

I

Griffith Griffiths has a Happy Thought and takes a Trip

Each new election for the Town Council found Griffith Griffiths still unelected. The primary season for his failure was a party matter : Griffiths was a Conservative, whereas every other Welshman in the town of Bryn Tirion was a Radical. Let him change his politics, said Bryn Tirion. No, said Griffith Griffiths, never ! And the town knew he meant it. But, added Griffiths, I *will* be a member. For thirty years this battle was waged ; children were born and their children ; mothers grew old and died ; and Griffiths grew rich in slate and sheep. Now he was sixty and still unsuccessful. If he wished he could buy up all Merionethshire ; true, but he could not buy up one independent honest Welshman, whether that Welshman counted his sheep by

tens or thousands. Nor, to do Griffiths justice, did he think of buying votes, for he was as honest as his fellow townsmen. Pulling his whiskers, he looked vindictively at the mantelpiece before him, with its cordon of shining, smiling china cats. Had he not done more for the village than any other man? He had given Bryn Tirion two sons of whom to be proud, he had provided the young minister with a wife in the person of a beloved daughter, he had piously paid for tearing down a shabby old treasure of a church built in the time of Edward I., he had presented the village with a fountain and a new bread-oven, he had introduced improved methods in cleaning and shearing sheep, and he employed daily over one hundred men in his slate-quarry. Notwithstanding all these benefactions, he was still obliged to consider schemes for winning a paltry election.

"That's a happy thought," he exclaimed, starting forward, "I'll do it. Aye, it'll win this time. I'll go for it myself an' bring it home, I will. There'll be no word spoke when they see that. It'll cost me a hundred pounds an' the trip, but I'll do it.

Griffith's eyes twinkled as he winked at the mantelpiece cats. "There'll be no doubt this time, my girls. No doubt, no doubt this time,

an' every old granny in the town a-thankin' me. Oho, ho, ho!"

Mrs. Griffiths peered in.

"Father!"

"Aye!"

"Father?"

"Well, *mother?*"

"Is it a joke?"

"No-o, a joke, yes, a—no-o, it is not."

"Father, what are ye thinkin'?"

"I—I, well, I've *been* a-thinkin'!" replied Griffiths, with conviction.

Mother's face expressed censure.

"I'm thinkin' *now*, mother, I'm thinkin' of goin' to Liverpool."

"Liverpool! an' what would ye be goin' there for?"

"I'm thinkin', mother, of goin' to-morrow."

"Thinkin' of goin' to-morrow?"

"Aye!"

"Are ye goin' about slate?"

"No, not just about slate," father hedged.

"Is it sheep?"

"No, not exactly sheep."

Mrs. Griffiths by this time regarded her husband with alarm.

"Ye've not been to Liverpool in twenty years; am I goin'?"

"Why, no, mother, I'll travel there one day and back the next. I'm—I'm a-goin' just—I'm a-goin' for the trip."

"For the trip!" sniffed Mrs. Griffiths.

"What'll I bring ye, mother?"

"I'm no' wantin' anything," replied Mrs. Griffiths coolly.

II

Griffith Griffiths takes a Trip and his Wife receives a Call

WHILE her generous husband was running about Liverpool to buy another benefaction for Bryn Tirion, Mrs. Griffiths was receiving calls at Sygyn Fawr.

"Good-day," said Olwyn Evans, stepping over the brass doorsill of Sygyn Fawr.

"Good-day," replied Betty Griffiths.

"I hear Griffiths is gone to Liverpool?"

"Aye, he is."

"He went yesterday?"

"Aye."

"He comes back this evening?"

"Aye."

The clock ticked and the china cats smiled blandly in the silence.

"He's not come yet?"

"No, he has not."

Olwyn readjusted her shawl.

"Evan says he's not taken the trip for twenty years?"

"No, twenty years ago this September."

"Rhys Goch says he's gone for new machinery come from Ameriky; has he so?"

At this point there was a chorus of yaps and shrieks from Colwyn Street, on which Sygyn Fawr stood.

"It's Marged Owen's baby, Johnny. Dalben's terriers are always upsettin' him when they're fightin'. At Cwm Dyli farm they say he's gone to sell sheep; has he so?"

"It's neither sheep nor slate," replied Betty Griffiths acridly.

"Is it so?"

The street rang with another volley of yells.

"It's Cidwm Powell this time, fallin' off the slate copin'. He always is; some day he'll fall in, an' I don't know what Maggie'll do then."

"No, nor I," added Olwyn Evans, "it's her only. Jane Wynne and Jane Jones is ill. Their folks've been to the chemist's in Tremadoc for them, but you'd think they'd have the doctor, now wouldn't you?"

"You would," assented Betty. "Jane Wynne's eighty; how old is Jane Jones?"

"She's comin' seventy-five."

"She is?"

"The chemist says it's failin' with both," commented Olwyn. "They'll not die very far apart. They'll be keepin' the minister busy what with visitin' them and then buryin' them. It'll be hard on Robert."

"It will."

"You say Griffiths is not back?"

"No, not back."

"He'll be comin'?"

"Aye."

"Goodbye."

"Goodbye."

III

Griffith Griffiths brings his Happy Thought Home

The evening light lay purple and lavender on the heather-covered hills; it cut through Aberglaslyn Pass in a golden shaft, gilding the jagged top of Craig y Llan and making the cliff side of Moel Hebog sparkle. Griffith Griffiths sniffed the honeyed air of his Welsh valleys hungrily. The nearer he came to home the more

purple seemed the heather and the more golden the gorse.

"How d'ye think of it, Griffiths?" said Jones, looking back approvingly.

"Well, the village hasn't any."

"It'll be a great surprise, man."

"It will be," agreed Griffiths.

"The folks over to C'n'rvon can't give themselves airs any more."

"Well, no, they cannot."

"Did Betty know?"

"No, a woman worries when she's to keep a secret."

"The folks have all been askin' for ye for two days"; and Jones's face shone with the same delighted goodwill as that on his master's.

"We'll take it to Ty Isaf; it'll be kept there."

"Aye. Ye're a thoughtful man, Griffiths. Ye've done about everything could be done for this village. There ain't a man better thought of nor ye, except ye're a Conservative. But they ought to put ye on the Council just the same."

The caravan moved slowly into Byrn Tirion. At the rumble of wheels Olwyn thrust her head out of Cwm Cloch door, took one look at the moving load, and rushed into the back garden for Evan.

To Ty Isaf they hurried with the crowd; girls with water-pails dropped them; children staggering along under mammoth loaves of bread fresh from the oven tumbled them in the white dust of the road; mothers with babies strapped to them by shawls tightened the shawls and hastened along; old women put down their bundles of faggots; dogs ceased their quarrelling and children their playing, all rushing in the same direction.

Griffiths and Jones were stripping away the crating.

"It's an organ for Chapèl," said Marged Owen.

"It's a new pulpit," exclaimed Maggie Powell.

"It's a HEARSE!" cried Olwyn Evans, as the bagging was ripped from one side.

For an instant admiration made the concourse silent; then old Marslie Powell said softly: "If the Lord had 'a' asked me what I wanted most He could not've done better."

"Surely, it is the Lord's gift," affirmed Ellen Roberts.

"To think I'd live to see a real live hearse!" shrilly exclaimed old Annie Dalben.

"It's a fine smart present, it is," said Howell Roberts, "an' there wouldn't no one else 'a' thought of it except Griffith Griffiths."

"It'll be pretty and tasty with mournin', now won't it!" commented Gwen Williams.

"It's a pity Jane Jones and Jane Wynne's too sick to be here an' see it when they're likely to have first chance at it!" declared Olwyn Evans.

"It'll be fine for the first as is buried in it," nodded Ellen Roberts wistfully.

"It'll be an honour," assented old Annie Dalben.

IV

Bryn Tirion sees a Lighted Candle of the Dead and a Contest

"THE doctor from Tremadoc has been called in," remarked Betty.

"Has he so!" replied Griffiths, toasting his feet before the fire and eyeing the smiling cats benevolently. "He's a clever young man."

"Aye, but it won't save Jane Jones nor Jane Wynne."

"No?"

"The Joneses is havin' him come every other day, so the Wynneses is doin' the same. They're both failin' rapidly. When the family asks about Jane Jones, all he'll say is, 'She's no worse.' An'

when the Wynneses ask about Jane Wynne he says, 'She's no better.' Olwyn Evans says it's her opinion he don't know which is worse; doctors, she thinks, has to keep quiet, they're always so uncertain what the Lord is plannin'. It'll be hard on Robert if they both die the same day an' he has to bury them simultaneous. Virginia says he's poorly now from havin' to make so many visits each day on the Joneses, to say nothin' of the neighbours flockin' in to ask him questions after each visit. It's hard on Robert."

"Aye, it is," assented Griffiths peacefully.

In the thirtieth year of the contest Griffith Griffiths had won his election; by the gift of the hearse he put Bryn Tirion under a final obligation. Politics paled before the generations of dead who would be indebted to this benefactor. That a man should be a Conservative or a Radical mattered not to the dead, and the living must discharge for the dead their debt of gratitude. But the outcome of this contest was quickly lost sight of in the uncertainty of a new strife. Would Jane Jones or Jane Wynne be buried first in the new hearse? While Griffiths and Betty were still discussing this question the door-knocker clapped rapidly.

"I do believe it's Olwyn Evans come with news," exclaimed Betty.

"Good-evening," said Olwyn, disposing of her greeting. "She's seen it!"

"Seen it?"

"Aye, Gwen Williams. She was walkin' there by the old hedge over the Glaslyn this evening, an' first she thought it was a light in the old mill, for it looked large just like a lamp-flame. Then she saw it was movin' and it was comin' toward her."

"It was the Candle of the Dead she saw?" asked Griffiths.

"Aye, it was; the nearer it came the smaller grew the flame till it was no bigger than a thimble. Gwen was frightened so she couldn't move from the wall; she let it pass close by her, and it was a woman carryin' the light."

"A woman!"

"Aye, a woman, an' she moved on to the doorsill of Jane Jones's house an' stopped there."

"Jane Jones's?"

"Aye, an' then she went over to Jane Wynne's door an' stopped there."

"She did?"

"Aye, she did, an' then she went over to the graveyard an' waved her candle over the gate, an' it went out. Gwen says there weren't no more thickness to her than to the candle-flame, —ye could thrust your finger straight through her."

"Which door did she go to first—Jane Jones's?"

"Aye, it was Jane Jones's, but Gwen says she stood nearer the Wynne's plot in the graveyard."

Griffith's eyes sought the cats, and he pulled his side-whiskers thoughtfully. "Ye cannot tell which it'll be, now can ye?"

"No, you cannot, but I've my opinion it'll be Jane Jones, she's more gone in the face. I must be goin'; Betty, will you be comin' with me; I promised Gwen I'd step in for a neighbourly look at the Joneses, an' perhaps I can help her decide which it'll be."

First they went to Jane Wynne's; they found her propped up in bed surrounded with a circle of interested neighbours. The doctor had just gone and the minister was on his way in. Old Marslie Powell curtsied gravely to the minister as he entered. "Dear love, she'll not last the night."

"Aye, aye," chorused the circle of neighbours, "her breath's failin' now."

But in Jane Wynne's eye there was a live coal of intelligence; she beckoned imperiously with her scrawny old hand to the young minister.

"If I do, ye'll put it on the stone?" she whispered eagerly.

"Yes, Jane, Hugh will have it done."

"She's not long," said Olwyn to Betty; "let us be goin' to Jane Jones's."

They walked across the street.

"Poor dear," said Ellen Roberts to them as they entered, "she'll not last till morn. Her heart's beatin' slower a'ready."

"Aye, aye, she's failin'," assented the neighbours.

"It would be a credit, somethin' to be proud on," whispered old Annie Dalben,

"Aye, a credit," agreed the neighbours.

Jane beckoned to the doctor.

"If I do, tell Robert Roberts to make mention of it in his sermon," she pleaded weakly.

"I will," replied the doctor.

"Well," remarked Olwyn Evans as they went out, "it'll be a credit either way to one of the families to be carried in that smart hearse. Jane Wynne's older, an' perhaps she'd ought to get it; but then the Joneses has always meant more to Bryn Tirion, an' it seems as if they'd ought to have the honour. I never saw two families more ambitious for anything. It does seem as if Griffiths had thought of everything a man could think of to benefit the village."

"Aye," assented Betty proudly, "he's a wonderful man for thinkin' of other folks."

V

Bryn Tirion sees Death Triumphant

"I DON'T know," said Olwyn Evans, in a resigned voice, "I don't know but it was best. The Wynneses always had fewer chances than the Joneses. Hugh Wynne didn't say much, but I could see he was happy, an' the Wynne girls was so pleased. They said as long as their mother had to go she couldn't have done better, the stone'll look so pretty with it all writ on it; an' then the hearse an' their mournin' did look so nice together."

"There was a good many folks there?" suggested Griffiths.

"Aye, there was; I thought it was more'n pleasant for all the Joneses to come, because they must feel disappointed with Jane Jones still livin'."

"Is she the same?" asked Griffiths.

"Aye, no worse."

"There was people at the funeral from Tremadoc," added Betty.

"From Tremadoc and from Rhyd Dhu, too. Some haven't ever seen a real hearse before. A cart to draw the coffin in is all the Rhyd Dhu folks know," concluded Olwyn.

"They say the plate on the coffin was more'n filled with money," added Betty.

"Aye, it was," said Olwyn; "there was more'n enough to pay both the doctor an' the minister. It does the town good to have a lot of folks here. They wasn't all interested in Jane Wynne, but they was interested in seein' which'd die first, an' in the hearse. I suppose they wanted to come an' make sure she really was dead. Well, you never did better by Bryn Tirion, Griffith."

"Aye," said Griffith, tapping his finger-tips together and smiling contentedly at the row of big-eyed, whiskered cats, "aye, it's an assistance."

Dreams in Jeopardy

Dreams in Jeopardy

Pedr Evans dived into the contents of a box of picture post-cards; from the shop counter all that could be seen of him was the back of broad shoulders, two inches of sturdy neck, well-shaped ears, and a thatch of brown hair. The box, which was large and placed on a shelf behind the counter, gave evidences to the person who could peek over the counter and around Pedr of being in an alarming state of disorder. Apparently the man fumbling among the cards intended to rearrange them; at least some line of the figure suggested that this was the impression he wished to convey. But it was as if he were running his hands through sand, for the post-cards slipped from his fingers and fell in even greater confusion. A woman who had entered the shop-door looked at his back a second—she had caught a rim of the face as it had turned quickly away—smiled, lifted her eyebrows, and stuck her tongue into one heavily tinted cheek.

"'Ts, 'ts," she hissed, behind her teeth.

Pedr wheeled about; in turning he caught the corner of his box of post-cards, and over they went upon the floor.

"Well, indeed, Catrin Griffiths," he said, with an attempt at composure.

"Aye, it's me," she answered airily. "Ffi! Playin' cards, Pedr Evans? Um-m, what would Nelw Parry be sayin'?"

Pedr coloured and shifted his weight.

"No, puttin' the stock in order," he objected.

"Yes? Well, an' playin' you didn't see me? Yes?"

Catrin patted the puffs of yellow hair that projected from under her pink hat, and, placing a finger on her lips, smiled insinuatingly at Pedr. It was evident as she stood before him that she considered herself alluring, a charming embodiment of the world and the flesh and the devil. Of that world, it was rumoured, Pedr Evans knew something; at least he had made excursions into it; he had been to Liverpool, nay, he had been even farther, for he had been to London. London! The word chimed as merrily in Catrin's ears as coronation bells. London! Pedr Evans had been to London, and the magic word had been in more mouths than Catrin's. There was never a question asked in Conway, climbing by degrees to the wise men

of the village and still failing an answer, but people would say, "Aye, well, indeed, *we* dunno, but Pedr Evans he's been to London, an' he'll know, whatever."

Catrin Griffiths had seen him mount the London coach, and she had seen him return. And, by a method of reasoning wholly her own, she had concluded that he would appreciate her, for she, Catrin Griffiths, had seen something of that world, too; she had seen highly-coloured prints of Piccadilly, the 'busses with gay people atop and fine ladies in their carriages clad in cloaks and furs and furbelows, throats and wrists bejewelled in a marvellous fashion, and such fine gentlemen driving the carriages; and, what is more, she had spelled painfully through the English, in which her tongue was stiff, of a beautiful romance, "Lady Nain's Escape." Catrin considered her worldly schooling of coloured pictures, a novel, and advertisements, the best, and with an occasional shilling sent to Liverpool she had literally applied this tuition to her face and figure. She realised, however, that there were still worlds for her to conquer, and a far enchanted land called Drawing Room into which she had not as yet had even a lithographic peep. Because she longed for greater nearness to this kingdom, therefore she longed

for Pedr. As she stood before him, her pink hat on her yellow hair, her painted face thick with chalk, her lips a glossy carmine, her throat embedded in fluffs of cheap tulle, her figure stuffed into an ancient dress of white serge, she was wondering how it would be possible for any man to resist her.

But the man whom she ogled blushed; he looked furtively towards the windows, and at the door at the back of the shop, and it was plain to be seen that he felt himself caught in a trap between his counter and the shelf. He seemed ashamed, ashamed to look at her.

"Well, Catrin," he said, without lifting his eyes, "what can I do for you to-day?"

"Dear *anwyl*, it's most slipped my mind—um-m—well, I'll be havin' sixpence worth of writin' paper."

"Aye, smooth, I suppose?" he asked, taking it from the shelf.

"No, I think I'll take it rough, for that's the style now, whatever."

"Oh! very well."

"Been takin' photographs lately, Pedr?"

"Not many."

"I'm thinkin' you'll be goin' down Caerhun way some day soon," she continued, her pink face wrinkling with mingled mirth and devilry;

"it's very pretty there, good for an artist like you."

Pedr folded in the ends of the parcel and said nothing.

"Aye," she went on, "an' there's an old church there, with a bell-tower that looks over the wall like an eye. It don't wink, Pedr, but I'm thinkin', indeed, it could tell a good deal, if it had a mind to. It's next to the church the Parrys used to live."

Pedr, tying the parcel and snapping the string, maintained his silence.

"It's there old Parry used to be drunk as a faucet; aye, an', Pedr," she whispered, "I could be tellin' you somethin' else. Nelw Parry——"

"Tut!" said Pedr angrily; "here's your parcel, Catrin Griffiths. You'll have to be excusin' me this morning, for I'm busy."

"Pooh, busy!" and Catrin laughed shrilly; "you're always busy when there's a mention of Nelw Parry. Well, ask Nelw herself what it is she can tell you that you don't know. Perhaps you'll be *wantin'* to know before you marry her."

And with a flounce Catrin Griffiths betook herself out of the shop.

Pedr with his back to the counter was the same as Pedr with his face to the shop-door;

however, he did not seem the same. The back suggested middle age, but the face was the face of a boy in its expression, with something perennially young about it: it may have been innocence or untouched pride or something that looked from his eyes as if they had been those of a mere girl. Indeed, except for a conscious awkwardness of hand and a certain steadfast, almost impassive look about the mouth, he might have recited an *awdl* or been a bard. Howbeit, he could neither play a harp nor recite an ode. And because he kept only a stationer's shop, which contained a fine medley of inferior post-cards scattered everywhere, piles of newspapers, books, shelves of letter-paper, trinkets of rustic and plebeian sort, it would not be safe to conclude that he was no more than a thoroughly commonplace man. Because he spent his leisure from the shop in taking pictures of the country he loved, it would not be wise to decide that he was therefore a poor, mediocre thing who had not brains enough to make even a very wretched artist; who was, in short, a mere factotum to higher ability.

Pedr's shop, which lay on a steep winding cobblestone street next to the Cambrian Pill Depôt, five doors down from Plas Mawr and twenty doors up from the Castle Gate, was

tenanted by dreams as fair and holy in service, although they never found their way into the world except by means of sensitised paper or by an occasional expression in Pedr's eye or tremble of his impassive lips—this shop was tenanted by dreams as fair as any which had ever waited upon accepted painter or poet. They had a habit of tiptoeing about unseen, so that the usual customer who entered Pedr's door would not have felt their presence. Nelw Parry had come to know them well, but before Catrin Griffiths they vanished away. The lovely colour of dawn itself was not gobbled up faster by the smoke of trade than these entities disappeared at the sound of Catrin Griffiths' heels upon the street. In fact the tiny beings were troubled by the presence of even post-cards, for, dream-like, they wished to give all they had, if need be, to the hearts which could be seen beating through the hands that held them, and these cards lying upon the floor, these flaunting things of many colours, were commerce; things, they thought, which were to steal something from men. Over the counter, from which a few minutes ago he had recoiled, Pedr Evans had often leaned, many invisible eyes smiling upon him, taking from some old folio pictures which had caught the very lustre of the sky; or the mingled

shadow and iridescence of a hillside, mysteriously suggestive of the sea; or some flow and subsidence of light itself. Like any other mortal, poor Pedr had to live, and that is why he was obliged to keep a shop next to the Cambrian Pill Depôt. If he had been an artist, the world might willingly have forgotten that he had to live at all and paid him just nothing for his work. But it was not the necessity of existence which made him lean upon the counter, showing a picture another man never would have had the wit to take. To Pedr something beautiful was always worth a plate, so he had many pictures no one bought, and he was not often given a chance to show.

Later in the day, after his encounter with Catrin Griffiths, Pedr was with Nelw Parry in the sitting-room of the Raven Temperance, drinking tea. Nelw's house, from the outside, was a quaint, stuccoed building with a quantity of chimney-pots sticking up into the sky, neat steps and a brass sill at the front door, a painted sign "Raven Temperance," and printed cards at the windows, one bearing a cyclist's wheel decorated with mercurial wings, the other the gratifying word, "Refreshments." Within the room were two people, both middle-aged, drinking tea—a commonplace enough scene the

casual observer would have said; however, at that moment these two people, even if they were doing nothing more romantic than talking quietly together, lifting their teacups once in a while and looking at each other a good deal, were very much like good children in a fairy tale. It may have been merely a trick of the light due to the low casement windows, that the room seemed more peaceful than most rooms in Conway; the subdued light touched the soft green walls gently, reaching for the top of the walls as if it were some enchanted region, to enter which it must climb. Indeed, it was an enchanted region, for there a shining silver river ran in and out, in and out, among alleys of green trees. In and out, in and out, it ran noiselessly, and yet it seemed to Pedr, as to some strangers who entered the little room for refreshments, to sing a song heard before—just when, just how, was another question. Some visitors who had been in that room once came again to sit, often bodily weary, while their eyes travelled to that border of the shining river, and the mistress of the "Raven" waited upon them tranquilly, placing the tea-service before them, and, it may be, adjusting a wrap about a stranger's shoulders as delicately as if she were adding to the comfort of some happy fancy, some ideal, some dream,

that a burdened touch might shatter. Grateful, there were tired travellers glad to come and go phantom-like, putting down their silver gently, in a room where reality seemed the greatest phantom of all.

To Pedr it was better than the best picture he had ever taken—better than the best because the thought of taking it would have seemed like desecration. He looked at Nelw, as he did every few seconds, alternately, over his teacup and then without that barrier to his gaze. Coils of dark hair made the shapely head heavy on the slender neck, as if the weight of that abundant beauty were great. It was wonderful hair, making in its shadowy depth a shade for the white, sensitive face, quiet as the reverie of her eyes. In a land where comely hair blessed poor and rich alike with its wealth, Nelw Parry's was even lovelier than that of her neighbours. It had one peculiarity, however, which her neighbours did not admire but which to Pedr—perhaps to something untutored in Pedr—was dear. Around the edges of its abundance little curls escaped.

"Nelw," he said, glancing at her wistfully, "they're prettier than ever."

She brushed the curls back and looked at him with reproach, as if something she was thinking

about, or something of which they had been talking, had been rudely disturbed. As an actual matter of fact they had been saying nothing for two or three minutes, indulging the speechlessness of those who know their way even by day to another land. But Pedr was aware what sort of answer any remark about Nelw's hair always fetched, so he changed the subject.

"Dearie, Catrin Griffiths was in the shop this mornin'."

"What was she wantin'?"

"I dunno; she bought sixpence worth of writin' paper," replied Pedr, regarding Nelw with the air of a man who would like to say more. He was wondering how much she guessed of Catrin's angling.

A shadow of annoyance passed over Nelw's face.

"Dearie," he continued, encouraged by her expression, "I can't like her, whatever; she's—she's not nice."

"Well, indeed, she's smart," answered Nelw gently.

"Tut! smart in those things she wears? She looks more than frowsy to me; an'—an' she's always coming into my shop."

"Poor thing!" murmured Nelw, her face tender with pity.

Pedr observed her wonderingly. What prompted this compassion in Nelw? What made her understand weakness without being disgusted or repelled by its ugliness? Other women were not like her in this respect. And just behind this yielding lovableness that yearned over the mistakes of others, that reached out to Pedr as one athirst for the necessity of life, that clung to Pedr for strength, for protection, like a child afraid of the dark, what was this sense he had, of an obstinate reticence which seemed the very resiliency of her mysterious nature? Certainly she had had a bitter life. Then, like a viper into its nest, what Catrin Griffiths had said darted into Pedr's mind. Was there something he did not know, that he ought to know? With the acuteness of the man who can detect the shadow of even a folded leaf, he searched Nelw's face. Why when she needed him, when she was alone, when she was fretted by the difficulties of her solitary life, why did she always put off their marriage? Baffled, irritated, he spoke sharply.

"Poor thing, nothin'! It's a pound head an' a ha'penny tail with Catrin Griffiths."

Nelw gasped

"A pound head an' a ha'penny tail, I say," he continued roughly, "Aye, an' the time is comin', comin' soon, when she'll get herself into trouble,

flauntin' around with those frocks on, all decked out, an' all her false seemin', her face painted and powdered, an' her hair dyed. The deceitful thing!"

"Och, Pedr, don't!"

But Pedr, excited beyond self-control by the workings of his imagination, could not stop. The blanching face before him was no more than a cipher, it expressed nothing to him.

"Tut! that I will. An' what is it Catrin Griffiths knows an' I don't? Yes?"

There was a cry of "Pedr!" Nelw shivered, her eyes widened and stared at him. It was so still in that room that the flutter of the draught sucking the smoke up the chimney could be heard. Pedr sat motionless in his chair, the reality of what he had done yet to reach him. Nelw moved, and in an instant he was beside her.

"Dearie, dearie, what have I done?"

"Och, nothin'—nothin' at all," she answered, her face twitching helplessly.

"But I did; och, I was beside myself; I didn't know what I was sayin'!" Pedr paused, he looked at her longingly: "Nelw, little lamb, is it *somethin'* I ought to know?"

"It's nothin', nothin' at all," she replied, her eyes still staring at him, her hands lying open upon

her lap, palms up. And there she sat and sighed and sighed, refusing to answer any of Pedr's questions; and, every once in a while, moaning, "Not him, dear God, och! not him!"

At dusk every day, and every day in the year except Sunday, and year after year, the servant had brought the lights into Pedr Evans's stationery shop, and, setting them down, had gone back into the kitchen. This evening, as she went into the room, scarcely knowing whether her master was in or not, everything had been so noiseless, she started, for there he sat, his head in his hands. Except for a slight disturbance when Pedr entered his shop, which it is probable no other human ear would have heard, there had not been a sound, until Betsan came in. Nelw's "Nothin', nothin' at all" had been going around and around in his mind like a turn-buckle tightening up his thoughts, till it seemed to him they would snap. Then it would be, "What has she done? what has she done?" He had known her, in her sensitiveness, to exaggerate; she had confided to him some of the incidents of her childhood, which would have been taken quietly enough by other children. But he was unable to reason away the horror that looked out from her face to-day. And he, Pedr Evans, had asked the question that had brought that expression! A question suggested by

a woman of whom even to think in the same moment was to dishonour Nelw. He wondered what it was that crawled into a man's mind and made him to do a thing like that?

Betsan had barely closed the door into the kitchen, when, like the vision of the woman who tempted St. Anthony, Catrin Griffiths stood before him, the shrewd ogling eyes looking at him out of the painted face. The question, the answer to which was of more concern to him than anything else on earth, surged back upon him and stifled him and beat in his temples and his ears till it seemed as if he could not breathe.

Catrin coughed.

"Um-m, Pedr Evans, I forgot the envelopes this mornin'."

"Well, indeed," he replied mechanically.

"Aye," she affirmed. Then asked, "Did ye see Nelw Parry this afternoon?" knowing that he had done so, for her room was opposite the Raven.

"Yes," he said.

"What was she tellin' you, eh, what? She's not so unlike me, yes?"

Pedr looked at her, his mind at a bow-and-string tension of expectancy.

"She didn't tell you, I see," Catrin continued. "Well, may every one pity the poor creature! You'll be wantin' to know so——"

But Catrin Griffiths never got any further, for with a leap Pedr was upon her.

"Out of my shop, girl, out!" and she was bundled through the door and the door slammed behind her and locked.

Pedr's feeling of passionate anger against himself as well as against Catrin gradually settled. He must try to think. He would see no one else to-night and turned out the lamps. For a minute the wicks flickered, puffing odd jets of shadow on the raftered ceiling. There was an instant of wavering flame, then darkness, and only the silvered window-panes looking into the obscure room like big shining eyes. Pedr sat still, thinking, sighing and sighing. There were vague rustling noises in the shop; every time he sighed it seemed as if the noises quivered together like dry leaves. What would it ever matter to him now what happened? Without warning he had been robbed of his happiness; even time never could have proved such a thief, for time was no common plunderer,—if it took away, often it put something far more precious in its place. Pedr had always liked to think what time meant to anything lastingly beautiful; he loved the houses better when they were old, the thought that they had been attractive to others, had held many joys and even sorrows,

made them beautiful to him ; he liked the lines in an old face, somehow they made it merrier, made it sweeter ; even the yellowing of a photograph, for Pedr was limited in his subjects from which to draw illustrations, pleased him with some added softening of tone. Life with Nelw, as it wound towards the end of the road, would be, he had thought, ever more and more enchanting, for just where the road dipped over into space there was the sky. Even Death confirmed love. That last blessing it had to give—the greatest blessing of all. But now his mind must be forever like the track of the snail in the dust. It was no matter to him now what lay upon the hillsides or within the valleys ; the heavy-domed shadows of foliage trees, the shadow of ripple upon ripple where the water wrinkles, were alike of little account. He sighed again, and there was the same succession of small sounds, for he was not alone in the room. Hidden away in all the corners and nooks of the darkened shop were scores of little beings, once his comrades. Now they hid and trembled in their dark places, shrinking from Pedr from whom it had been their wont to take what the all-powerful hand offered. They well knew what tragedy might be coming to them, for of their race more had died in one age than of the race of man in all ages. But

like the children of men, till the moment of danger they had counted themselves secure, and now when Pedr sighed it was as if the sea went over them. They had always been so well off; but they had seen the fate of their kin, the wide reachless waters that had unexpectedly surrounded them, the boiling of the waves, the calm, and the bodies floating on the surface, their wee diaphanous hands empty of the hearts that had once beat through them, their faces looking with closed eyes up into the everlasting day. As Pedr sighed again and again, they shook now, their hands over their ears, in the dusty holes of the shop. At last Pedr sighed a mighty sigh, and it was like the shaking of the wind in a great tree. Although it was a mighty sigh, the little beings uncovered their ears, and, with a new expression on their faces, leaned forward to hear it repeated. It came once more. Then they crept softly out of their nooks and small recesses and dusty corners, and stood tiptoe waiting for the next sigh. It came, and the wind seemed to shake down lightly through the great tree with the most dulcet notes in all the world; whisperings and tremolos and flutings and pipings. At that, the little beings ran from every part of the shop, and Pedr heard them coming; they clambered about his knees, they climbed into his lap, and

Pedr gathered them all into his arms—that is as many as he could hold, and the rest seemed happy enough without being there.

If the truth must be told, Pedr slept soundly that night, just like the most fortunate of lovers. And the next morning, after he had found fault with his breakfast and scolded Betsan for her late rising, he betook himself, with a far more cheerful heart than he had known in many hours, to Nelw's. Pedr in the darkened shop had learned a lesson which he would not have exchanged for any pure unmixed joy upon earth. And he knew even now, with the sun upon him and a strange yearning within him, that it mattered very little what Nelw had done or was hiding from him, for despite every dreadful possibility he loved her with a feeling that mastered fear.

When Nelw opened the door for him she shrank away.

"Och, Pedr," she said, "so early!"

"Well, indeed, *so* early," he replied, with an attempt at gaiety.

"So now I must be tellin' you," she whispered, hanging her head, and looking, with her white face, ready to sink to the floor.

"Indeed, dearie, you'll not be tellin' me, whatever," he declared hotly.

"Pedr!" she exclaimed, "but you said Catrin Griffiths—alas, I must tell you!" She lifted her hand as if she were going to point to something and then dropped it.

"I'm not carin' what I said about Catrin Griffiths or about any one else. Dear little heart, you're makin' yourself sick over this an'——"

"Och, but I must tell you!" and again came the futile motion of the hand.

"You shall not!" he commanded.

"Yes, now, now," she cried, lifting her hand; "Pedr I—I have——"

Pedr seized the uplifted hand.

"No, Nelw, no;" and he put his finger over her mouth and drew her to him.

"Pedr, I must," she pleaded, struggling to free herself.

"No, not now; I'm not carin' to know now. Wait until we're married."

"Oh no, oh no!" Nelw moaned. "That wouldn't be fair to you. Och, if you knew——"

But Pedr covered her mouth with his hand and drew her closer.

"Not now, little lamb."

She sat quite still, her head upon his shoulder. Pedr felt her relaxing and heard her sighing frequently. She seemed so little and so light where she rested upon him, almost a child, and

a new sense of contentment stole over Pedr. He patted her face; she made no reply, but he felt her draw nearer to him. At last she lifted her hand and passed it gently over his head.

"Och, Pedr," she whispered, "I'm growin' old."

"Old, nothin'," replied Pedr.

"Aye, but I'm over thirty."

"Pooh!" returned Pedr, "that's nothin'!"

"Yes, it is; an' as I grew older you would mind even more if——"

"Nelw," said Pedr warningly, covering her mouth again.

"But, Pedr, how could you love me when I'd grown very old? I wouldn't have any hair at all," she faltered, "an' not any teeth," she continued, gasping painfully, "an'—an' wrinkles an' oh—an' oh—dear!" she half sobbed.

"Tut," said Pedr calmly, "what of it? It's always that way, an' I'm thinkin' love could get over a little difficulty like that, whatever. Indeed, I'm thinkin' what with love an' time we'd scarcely notice it. I dunno," he added reflectively, "if we did notice it I'm thinkin' we'd love each other better."

At these words Nelw smiled a little as if she were forgetting her trouble. After a while she spoke—

"You are comin' this afternoon again, Pedr, are you?"

"Yes, dearie," he answered, "I'm comin'."

"Och, an' it must—it must be told," she ended, forlornly.

It was quiet up and down the winding cobble-stone street; no two-wheeled carts jaunted by; there was no clatter of wooden clogs, no merriment of children playing, no noise of dogs barking. And all this quietude was due to the simple fact that people were preparing to take their tea, that within doors kettles were boiling, piles of thin bread and butter being sliced, jam—if the family was a fortunate one—being turned out into dishes, pound-cake cut in delectably thick slices, and, if the occasion happened to need special honouring, light cakes being browned in the frying-pan. Previous to the actual consumption of tea, the men, their legs spread wide apart, were sitting before the fire, enjoying the possession of a good wife or mother who could lay a snowy cloth. And the children, having passed one straddling age and not having come to the next, were busy sticking hungry little noses into every article set upon the cloth, afraid, however, to do more than smell a foretaste of paradise.

So the street, except for a gusty wind that romped around corners, was deserted. When Nelw Parry opened a casement on the second

floor, she saw not a soul. She looked up and down, up and down,—no, there was not a body stirring. Then her head disappeared, and shortly one hand reappeared and hung something to the sill. True, there was not a soul upon the street, but opposite the Raven Temperance, behind carefully-closed lattice windows, sat a woman who saw everything. Catrin Griffiths had been waiting there some time to discover whether Pedr Evans would come to-day as he did other days at half-past four. But when she beheld Nelw's hand reappear to hang something at the window, she jumped up, with a curious expression on her face, exclaiming, "A wonder!" and ran swiftly downstairs and out into the street. Once in the street she gazed steadily at the object swinging from the casement of the Raven, and again, "A wonder!" she ejaculated. She began to laugh in a harsh low fashion, then shrilly and more shrilly. "Oh, the lamb!" she exclaimed, "oh, the innocent!" Her hilarity increased, and she slapped herself on the hip, and finally held on to her bodice as if she would burst asunder. At the doors, heads appeared; some disappeared immediately upon descrying Catrin, but others thrust them out further.

"See" she called, seeing Modlan Jones coming towards her, "there's Nelw Parry's *cocyn*."

Modlan canted her head upwards towards the object and chuckled—

"Ow, the idiot!"

"Och, the innocent!" laughed Catrin. "'Ts, 'ts," she called to Malw Owens, who, munching bread, was approaching from a little alley-way; "Nelw Parry's *cocyn's* unfurled at last an' flappin' in the breeze."

One by one a throng gathered under the walls of the Raven Temperance, and the explosions of mirth and the exclamations multiplied, until the whole street rang with the boisterous noise, and one word, "*Cocyn! cocyn!*" rebounded from lip to lip and wall to wall. But there were some who, coming all the way out of their quiet houses and seeing the occasion of this mad glee, shook their heads sadly and said, "Poor thing! she's not wise!" and went in again. And there were others who passed by on the other side of the road, and they, too, muttered, "Druan bach!" pityingly, and if they were old enough to have growing sons, cast glances none too kind at Catrin Griffiths. Evidently the "poor little thing" was not intended for her; but, indeed, they might have spared one for her, for it is possible that she needed it more than the woman who lay indoors in a convulsion of tears. Suddenly, amidst the nudges and thrusts and

sniggers and shrieks, Catrin clapped her hands together.

"Listen," she bade, "now listen! I'll be fetchin' Pedr." And with a snort of amusement from them all, she was off down the street.

What happened to Catrin before she reached Pedr's door will never be told. By the time she came to the Cambrian Pill Depôt she was screwing her courage desperately. Even the most callous have strange visitations of fear, odd forebodings of failure, and hang as devoutly upon Providence as the most pious. It would be robbing no one to give Catrin a kind word or, indeed, a tear or two. Good words and tears are spent gladly upon a blind man, then why not upon Catrin, whose blindness was an ever-night far deeper? She was but groping for something she thought she needed, for something to make her happier, as every man does. And now, as it often is with the one who hugs his virtue as well as with the sinful, the road slipped suddenly beneath her feet and her thoughts were plunged forward into a dark place of fears. She, who always had had breath and to spare for the expression of any vulgar or trivial idea which came to her, could barely say, as she thrust her head in at the door of Pedr's shop, "Nelw Parry'll be needin' you now." What she had intended

to say was something quite different; since she did not say it, it need not be repeated here.

It seemed an eternity to Pedr before, without any show of following Catrin too closely, he could leave the shop. The sounds of the jangling voices he was nearing mingled with the gusty wind that whickered around housetops and corners, and brushed roughly by him with a dismal sound. He walked with slow deliberateness, but his thoughts ran courier-like ever forward and before him. To his sight things had a peculiar distinctness, adding in some way to his foreknowledge, prescient with the distress he heard in the wind. He looked up to the casement towards which all eyes were directed. Something attached to the sill whipped out in the wind and then flirted aimlessly to and fro. Pedr scanned it intently. Another gust of wind caught it, and again it spread out and waved about glossily plume-like. Then for a moment, unstirred by the air, it hung limp against the house-side; it was glossy and black and—and—thought Pedr with a rush of comprehension—like a long strand of Nelw's hair.

There were suppressed titters and sly winks as he came to the group before the Raven.

"Ffi, the poor fellow, I wonder what he'll do now?" asked one.

"Hush!" said another.

"Well, indeed," answered a third, tapping her head significantly, "what would one expect when she's not wise?"

"He's goin' in," said a fourth.

While all eyes were upon Pedr, Catrin Griffiths had slipped away from their midst, slid along the wall, and stolen across the street. The look upon Pedr's face was like a hot iron among her wretched thoughts, and hiss! hiss! hiss! it was cutting down through all those strings that had held her baggage of body and soul together.

Pedr made his way into the house and to the couch where Nelw lay.

"Nelw," he said.

Nelw caught her breath between sobs.

"Nelw," he repeated gently, sitting down by her, "there, little lamb!"

Nelw stopped crying.

"Pedr, did you see?" she asked.

"Did I see? Yes, I saw your *cocyn* hangin' to the window."

Nelw sat up straight.

"Do—do you understand, Pedr? Did you hear them mockin' me?"

"Aye, an' I know it's your *cocyn*." Pedr smiled, "Little lamb, did you think that would make any difference?"

"But, Pedr," she said insistently, as if she must make him understand, "these curls are all I really—really have." She drew one out straight.

"Aye, dearie, I'm thinkin' that is enough."

If he had been telling her a fairy story Nelw's eyes could not have grown wider.

Pedr cocked his head critically to one side.

"It's very pretty, whatever," he added; "I was always likin' that part of your hair the best."

And now there is no more story to tell; for Pedr set to work to get the tea for Nelw. As he went in and out of a door, sometimes they smiled at each other foolishly and sometimes Pedr came near enough to pat her on the head. The room, although it would have been difficult to lay hands on its visitors, had other inmates too, for it was full of Pedr's comrades. Every minute they increased in number, as is the way of the world when two people, even if they are not very wise,—and of course they never will be wise if they are not by the time they are middle-aged,—are joined together in love. And every one of these little visitors took the heart it held in its wee transparent hands and offered it to Nelw. And Nelw, as Pedr had done almost twenty-four hours ago, gathered

the dreams into her arms, and there they lay upon her breast like the children they really were. And above this scene the shining silver river ran in and out, in and out among its alleys of green trees singing a gentle song which, once it has been learned, can never be forgotten.

Tit
for
Tat

Tit for Tat

On the chimney-pot of Adam Jones's cottage sat two rooks. They put their bills together this morning just as they did every day, and one said "Ma! Ma!" and the other answered "Pa! Pa!" in raucous but affectionate tones. And the grey wood-pigeons in the woods said "Coo! Coo! Coo!" all day long; and the geese by the stream made futile rushes at one another and passed harmlessly like clumsy knights atilt. And when the kittens played, as they did sometimes on Twthill, there was no suggestion of frolic about it; the ladies' chain with their mother's hind legs was done with such harmonious *ensemble* that it was just as quiet as the chapel-going step of old Deacon Aphael Tuck and his wife Olwyn. Even the lusty toad who lived under the holly-bush hopped only half-way home, and then, lifting himself unwillingly, straddled *pronunciamento* to the holly stem.

At half-past seven the milkman went by,

with a very small can in a very small cart, ringing a very big bell,—a bell big as a dinner-bell, that went "Ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong," in the sleepiest fashion in all the world. And this bell the milkman had to ring a long, long time, for, either it put the inhabitants to sleep and then they must have leisure to wake up again before they could attend to their business, or they were asleep anyway and must have time to get up. And an hour later the post went by, marked V. R. in large shabby gilt letters, for you may be certain that *Eduardus Rex* had not yet got on to any document inside or outside this cart that bowled slowly up Twthill, looking as it disappeared at the top like a lazy beetle crawling into a hole. And down at the bottom of Twthill a little stream purred and purred and purred, like a convention of all the comfortable tabby-cats in the universe, or a caucus of drowsy tea-kettles. In the woods beyond the stream, where the wood-pigeons cooed, a little bird called "Slee-eep! Slee-ep! Slee-p!" Some of the young people on Twthill had been known to maintain that it said "Sweet! Sweet! Sweet!" But later they changed their minds, and it seemed like "Sleep! Sleep! Sleep!" to them, too, and they sharply corrected other young people for thinking nonsense. And every day

there was the sound of Deacon Aphael Tuck puffing up the hill, saying under his breath, "Tut, tut, tut, a hill whatever, tut, now isn't it!"

At the foot of the hill, in the midst of all this quiet lived a little old woman, Gladys Jones, the wife of Deacon Adam Jones. The Welsh have a saying that the first man Adam was a Welshman and that his name was Adam Jones. However that may be, this Adam Jones seemed assuredly the first man in all the world to Gladys, and, in the course of the story you may consider Adam justified in thinking of Gladys sometimes as his Eve. They were very different in appearance. He was tall, gaunt, with a saintly look about his waxen features, a look made attractively human by two deep lines on either side of his mouth. When Gladys was at her antics, caprioling like a shy, pathetic marmoset, these lines deepened, and he would pull his beard and his eyes would twinkle much as stars twinkle on a frosty night. Adam Jones was a saint, and he had need to be. Gladys was tiny in size, round, merry, alert. Her face was round, too, with cheeks as full-moulded as a baby's, and a small pointed chin that was as sensitive as it was whimsical, and wide, round blue eyes that were as apt to weep as they were to sparkle.

This Saturday morning Gladys sat by the hearth, her head forward, listening for a step. At her left the table was spread with an abundant breakfast. As she listened, misfortune did not come running, but slowly and with the footfall of an old man. Gladys was waiting for an answer concerning the thing she wished to do more than anything else in the world, more than she had ever wished to do anything; the thing she had never done, the thing she had never had a chance to do: go to the Circus. The Circus was to be held on Monday in Carnarvon, near the Castle where the Eisteddfod was held last year; and Carnarvon, only eight miles away, was her old home. She knew that no one else in Twthill had even thought of such an act as going. But what was there wicked about it? Gladys asked herself; and reasoning thus she forthwith asked the deacon for permission. First he looked astounded, then he said he must consider the matter over-night. Now he was coming in to breakfast, and she would have his answer.

Adam Jones came slowly through the doorway, which was surmounted by a gable guard of slate pigeons and flanked by slate rosettes. Out on the hedge poised a privet-cut pigeon, lacking the evil eye of his slate brethren, but

possessed of an evil green tail now pointed with evil significance at Adam's entering back.

"Well, dad," said Gladys, as he took his seat at the table.

"Aye, mam, the mist means fine summer weather, indeed."

"Have ye been thinkin', father?"

"I dunno——" he faltered. "Aye, mam; better the evil we know than that we know not."

"Och, dad, am I *not* to go?"

"'Twould be playing with fire, and that's no play, mam. I've been talkin' with Aphael Tuck, and with Keri Lewis, and Evan Edwards, and they say the only man in Twthill has thought of goin' is Morris Thomas. Morris Thomas is a dark bird, he's always had a long spoon to eat with the devil, whatever. His missus is sick cryin' over his ways."

"But, father, I long so to go!" sobbed Gladys.

"Mother, ye are too gay, too gay! A weak doctrine, an easy path." The deacon was inclined to attribute Gladys's gaiety to her Wesleyanism; he himself was a Calvinist.

At this moment, with tears rolling down her cheeks, Gladys did not look over gay; and it would have been difficult for any one to divine

the reputation for liveliness which she had made for herself. No good was coming to her now because she had lightened the heavy quiet of Twthill in various ways ; because she had talked with the slate pigeons and clipped the wicked green tail of the privet pigeon ; because she twinkled over the candytuft, bright and beautiful enough for a dozen Joseph's coats, or rang the Canterbury bells when nobody was looking, or pulled the bees off the honeysuckle, or fed the tiny sparrows and sandpipers and rooks as if they were geese, or tickled the toad under the holly-bush till he swelled with joy. It was no consolation to her now that she had always found something during the quiet dreary hours on Twthill to please her fancy, or that she had turned her attention successfully to her neighbours. Mrs. Thomas the greengrocer was a stupid thing, Betty Harries proud, and Olwyn Tuck the shop, starched with her doctrines. Many a trap of words had she set for them and many a trap had been sprung. There were harmless practical jokes, too, and there were match-making and theology. In these heat-producing topics Gladys had gained no mean skill, as the privet pigeon knew.

But the deacon took a serious view of her relation to a possible future. He longed to grant

everything she might desire. However, there was her soul to be kept! He gathered himself together.

"Mam, ye cannot go," was his final word.

Adam got up; he wanted to go out very much, and Gladys sat alone thinking. At last she straightened, and shook her head; then she half laughed, then she half cried, as children sometimes laugh and cry almost in the same breath. After this she said aloud to herself—

"I will do it, now, won't I?" She nodded, "Aye, I will indeed."

She arose, looking mischievously wicked, and stole out of the back-door of the cottage. She glanced about, and evidently her eyes alighted on what she wished, for she stood there thinking. It wasn't fair, och! it was such a silent place, not worth a man's while to wake up in. And that stream, purr, purr, purr, purr all day long, just as if the cats couldn't attend to that sort of noise better. And those heavy-looking ugly-coloured foxglove bells that grew on the sunny side of the stone wall, and rustled "Tinkle-tinkle, tinkle-tinkle" in a way that Gladys had sometimes thought like the mysterious swishing of dry leaves or the scampering of tiny feet. What if they did know a deal about the Little Folk, it was of no earthly

use to her. And the white clover and the red clover had such a warm sleepy smell, and those loppy dandelions that grew tall and drooped over, and those silly pink and white stonecrops that lay as still as lizards on the stone wall! Och, what if she had played with them once? She hated them all now. This stillness weighed down upon her like the rocks upon the hills.

She took something from the clothes-line and went into the house. Then she opened a long, heavy chest and was busy in its depths for several minutes. After that she was restlessly active throughout the day. At last bedtime came, and she went to sleep as innocently as the lamb in the sheepfold. But Adam Jones lay awake. He touched the plump wrinkled cheek gently and looked at Gladys's frilled nightcap with inexpressible longing. White Love, she was so different from other bodies in Twthill, enough to make a man happy as in the Garden of Eden these long years, but enough to vex him sorely too. Aye, he must manage to keep her soul for her, and the good deacon, his hands folded on his chest, his eyes blinking in an effort to stay awake, passed from prayers for Gladys into sleep.

When they arose, the quiet on Twthill had

deepened to silence, for it was the Sabbath. The milkman made his rounds as usual, but instead of the dinner-bell he had a small boy who tiptoed from door to door, gently rapping up the good wives. There was no sound in all Twthill ; only the smoke from the chimney-pots told of the life within. And all day long there would be no sound except the Chapel bell ringing worshippers to service and the tread of obedient Sunday-shod feet.

"Come," said Adam Jones to Gladys, "'tis time to be dressin' for Chapel."

"Nay, I'm not goin'."

"Not goin'! Dear heart, what's come over ye?"

"I'm not goin'," was all Gladys obstinately replied.

This was all the good deacon could get from her. Nor would she stir from her place by the fire.

"Mam, where's my Sunday socks?" he called from upstairs.

"How should I be knowin'?"

"But I cannot find them," was the distressed answer, while bureau drawers flew in and out.

"Mam," he called again, "I can't find them whatever, an' my grey socks are not here, either."

"They're in the mendin' basket to be darned."

"But, mam, then there's the other pair of greys?"

"They're not clean, they're to be washed to-morrow."

"Tut, tut, tut," said the deacon, sitting on the edge of the bed; then he pulled his boots on over bare feet and stretched down his trousers as far as he could. After that he went meekly downstairs.

"Where's my Sunday coat, mam?"

"In the chest where it is always."

"In the chest?"

"Aye."

Adam Jones bent over the big box where his Sunday coat lay spread out carefully from Sabbath to Sabbath. He groped around, fished out the coat, put it on unaided by Gladys, and leaned over his wife to say good-bye.

"Ye're not lovin' me much to-day, mother, are ye?"

Gladys gulped and pushed him away.

He left the house, his Bible under his arm, to join the people streaming up Twthill to the Chapel. Gladys ran to the door and called once. He turned around, but she bit her lips and said, "No matter."

As Adam stepped into the upward moving

throng, Mrs. Thomas, the wife of Morris Thomas, whispered—

"Och, Morris, look!"

Morris gave one look, covered his mouth with his fingers, and began to shake; but dark bird that he was and long spoon that he had for supping with the devil, his face took on a pitying expression.

"'Tis too bad," he said; "what shall I do?"

Meantime the children had begun to giggle, little Dilys, and Haf and Delwyn and Ifor and Kats, and a score more. The suppressed tittering caught all the way down the line like a fuse attended by sundry minor explosions, and every eye was directed at Deacon Jones's back. But Morris's question remained unanswered, and no one did anything. The deacon, with his gentle bows to right and left and his long stride, skimmed past couple after couple, and entering the Chapel took his deacon's seat immediately under the pulpit, his back to the congregation.

Other deacons gathered rapidly about him on the circular seat, and there was much nudging among them, and more stir and craning of necks in the Chapel than had ever been there before. But soon the worshippers were launched upon a discussion of Arminianism, that unfortunate set

of questions gentle John Wesley managed to flourish before Calvinism. Now Calvinism, full-tilt, rushed smoking and roaring from the kind mouths of the good people in the Chapel, belching flame and destruction upon the laxity of Wesleyanism. Deacon Adam Jones, with his eyes tight closed and his heart bursting with sorrow, was engaged in something like prayer. No matter that he could not know within himself that he was one of the elect. After all, if he strove to be saved and then wasn't, he could not grumble. He had tried his best; if he failed it was not his fault, But oh, his beloved Gladys, that her feet might be on the Rock and off this sliding sand of Wesleyanism! Or that already he might be landed on the happy shores of the other side, and know her foreordained to be saved! She might ride the wicked Elephant and not fall; a thousand circuses would not harm her in his sight.

Suddenly there was the tramping of a multitude in their silent Sabbath street, followed by a wild "Yah!" The deacons quivered together like so many leaves on a branch, and looked to the high windows, but the windows were so high that only the hills peered down serenely upon the congregation.

At home Gladys, eyeing disconsolately the

bright fire and the rows of brass candlesticks and the big shiny cheese dishes, sat in the same place in which Adam had left her. Ah! it was wicked for her to have done that, for her husband was so gentle to her, no man could be better. And now she was making a laughing-stock of the lad among the neighbours. The tears rolled out of her eyes, and, irresponsible little body that she was, with the flow of her tears there came a great desire to be comforted for her wickedness. Adam had always comforted her. Suddenly she sat up, for there was the sound of many feet upon the road. She listened, she looked out, she gasped, she sped to the hedge. A great procession was going by. Her amazed eyes fell upon camels, with gentlemen in baggy trousers on their backs. The camels were walking forward, stealthily spreading out their soft-padded feet. And there were many elephants, uneasily swaying the keepers who sat on their heads; for the elephants, hearing the purring of the stream, thought it sounded like the rustling of long jungle-grass, and wished more than anything else that this tidy little hill were a jungle in which they might lie down. Instead, they must trundle wearily up hill, taking comfort in elephantine ways by holding by their trunks to one another's tails. And the

ladies from Egypt, seated high in a great barge, fanned themselves and looked yellow and much as Cleopatra must have looked when Mark Antony wooed her. And the float-full of American Indians seemed tired, and something must have been washed off their faces, for certainly they were not red. And the gentlemen representing the musical talent of the German Empire were mopping their fat necks. And in the huge barge representing Japan, courteous little Japs covered their yawns with fastidiously-kept hands. And the "artist" who sat inside the steam-organ wagon became so sleepy that his hand slipped and struck one of the organ pedals. "Yah!" screeched the organ, and I think it was the loudest sound ever heard on Twthill. The only rosy, tidy being in the whole procession was a little maid in white cap and apron who was hanging up fresh towels in one of the living vans, and peeping out of the window at the curious cottages and unpronounceable names decorating each one that she saw. There was no talking, no laughter. This was part of the day's work for these men and women and beasts. They were on their way to Carnarvon for Monday's performance. The men looked tired and sober, and so did the women. Gladys thought they all seemed strangely draggled.

Indeed, she had imagined they would be quite different, so bright and beautiful, very creatures of the air like the birds. She believed she did not wish to go to the circus after all, for if they were not happy, she was certain she could never be happy looking at them, poor dears! If only Adam would come home, she could stand the stillness, and she would never do anything wrong again.

In the Chapel the service went forward without interruption; the minister, a man of character, convinced that he had met on Twthill all the forces of the world and the flesh and the devil, was not to be terrified by a multitude of feet, even though those feet were an avenging host sent for the destruction of this wicked village, in which he laboured and struggled in vain. The congregation, ignorant of this unflattering opinion of them, followed their heroic leader to a man.

At the close of the service, Deacon Aphael Tuck leaned forward towards Adam Jones.

"Mr. Jones, your socks—your socks——"

"What is that, Mr. Tuck?"

"Your socks. I'm sorry, but did ye intend——"

"Aye, my socks, Deacon," said Adam, looking apprehensively towards his boots, "aye,

I've been lookin' for them — my Sunday socks."

"They're on your back," said the senior deacon, coughing.

Adam Jones flushed all over his pale face; then he smiled, much as if he enjoyed having his Sunday socks on his back rather than on his feet, and then, recollecting, he began to explain to the deacon.

"Well, 'tis Sunday,"—the deacon knew this,—"and Gladys takes very good care of my clothes whatever, and puts them—lays them out in the chest an'—an' she's not well to-day."

While Aphael Tuck was pulling out the strong stitches with which the socks were tacked on,—strong stitches which he and Mrs. Tuck often discussed later as part of the liveliest day Twthill had ever known,—the Recording Angel, who had been taking down Adam's prayers much cut in angelic shorthand, spaced out every one of these half-true faltering words carefully, and over them, the Angel wrote, in beautiful bright letters, LOVE, and beneath them, with lax impartiality to Calvinism and Wesleyanism, made this note, "Elect: Adam and wife."

An
Oriel
in
Eden

An Oriel in Eden

Mrs. Jenkins looked over at Mr. Jenkins the shop, merchant and bard, and there was love and wonderment in her eyes. He was reclining in an arm-chair, his long legs stretched before him, his head at rest against the chair, his hands folded over his stomach, his eyes tight closed, his mouth wide open, his lips moving, and every once in a while his tongue quickly lapping his upper lip. Janny looked away and out of the windows to the meadows that rolled up into the mist like big grey waves; this was the act of composition, she knew, and too sacred even for her, his humbler half, to behold. But the misty uplands suggested overmuch of that unnamable something which, when she looked at her husband, made her wish to shut her eyes; for, might she not, Janny reasoned, see more than she ought to see of the divine spirit that moved behind those hills and behind the lips of Ariel Jenkins. So her thoughts slipped back into the living-room of Ty Mawr, while her

eyes avoided the inspired contents of the arm-chair. She had been a bride and the envied mistress of Ty Mawr just two weeks; however, she was forty and matrimony was late for her, and Ariel Jenkins being forty-five, it was none too early for him. Janny felt her responsibilities keenly. Was she living up to them? She was at the mercantile centre of the village, her better half was not only a merchant but also a crowned poet, her house the most important in Glaslyn. And Glaslyn expected changes; Mrs. Parry Wynn the baker said so, Mrs. Gomer Roberts the tinman had prophesied, and Mrs. Jeezer Morris the minister had whispered to Betto Griffiths who had told Janny of these expectations, that she supposed, nay, she *hoped* Ariel Jenkins's home with a woman in it would soon look like a God-fearing place and receive some improvements. Janny's glance roved through the sitting-room. She had made a few alterations, but somehow in the half-light of dusk they seemed as nothing. What was the moving or replenishing of a taper holder, a fresh case for Ariel's harp, a new cover for the table, or the addition of a few pleasant-faced china cats to a regimental mantelpiece,—indeed, she sadly asked herself, what were these changes in comparison with the unappointed

something she was expected to accomplish as Mrs. Ariel Jenkins the shop? She was a stranger in Glaslyn, an intruder from a great outside world, and now she felt bewildered, lonely. Her eyes flitted to Ariel's face for company.

"Dearie!"

There was no answer.

"Is it comin', Ariel dear?"

"Aye," he snapped.

Janny winced; she had never lived with genius, and, somehow, she thought it would be different. Her deep-blue eyes had a still look in them that suggested not only a long habit of self-repression but also perplexity, and sadness, too; there was appeal in every feature of her face,—an appeal made the more pathetic, perhaps, by the childlike lines of pale-gold curling hair about her forehead and tired eyes, and the delicate hollows beneath her cheek-bones, and the fragile sweetness of her mouth. It was a face in its soft bloom and delicacy, forever young and yet unforgettably weary. She straightened out her kirtle, and again her glance roved the room. There must be a clean hearth-brush, new muslin curtains for the casement; the stairway landing, where it turned by the front windows, even in the twilight looked shabby with the wear and tear of heavily-booted feet and

clogs, the light from the oriel window above the landing shining through with bald ugliness upon the stairs. As she looked at the light Janny's eyes dilated, her face flushed, and she leaned forward, gazing intently at the window. For the minute she had forgotten Ariel, but he, puff, puff, puff, with many sighs and yawns and much stretching of his long legs, was coming out of his inspired coma. His awakening look fell upon Janny there where she sat, her hands clasped in her lap, her shoulders tipped forward, her chin tilted upward, a circle of quiet light about her hair, her eyes intent upon the stairway window.

"Janny dear, what is it? What are ye lookin' at?"

"Oh! na—aye, lad, I—I——"

"Well, well, Janny!"

"Ariel, I was thinkin'."

"Aye, an' ye were plannin', too."

He was thoroughly aroused now from his inspiration, and studying that object, woman, which through some twenty-five years he had sung and praised. Ariel's eyes searched her; stanza, metre, rhyme, theme, were all forgotten, for he saw that Janny possessed a thought she had no intention of parting with to him. He glanced from her to the window upon which

she had been looking so rapturously when he surprised her gaze. So far as he could see it was like any other stairway light in Glaslyn, except that it was oval instead of rectangular, and perhaps a little deeper than some, but otherwise precisely like scores he had seen. Then he called imagination to his aid, that imagination which had been the means of begetting shillings over the counter of his shop, which had won for him a comfortable income, and commercial success, as well as made him the foremost bard in his county. He peered through the window ; what he beheld was a bit of dusky sky with a shadowy star seemingly behind it. He dismissed imagination and returned to the study of his bride. It was a whim probably ; perhaps one of those unshaped thoughts, elemental, unspoken, to which women listen in their idle moments ; indeed, it might even be some dreaming about him of which Janny in the shyness of their relation, still new, was too sensitive to speak. Gradually Ariel forgot the problem in his renewed consciousness of the charm of Janny, with her deep blue eyes, her childlike pale-gold hair, the delicate lines of her fragile face so different from the Welsh women of their village. Under his scrutiny Janny sat serenely with a more than wonted air of self-possession.

She interrupted him: "Ariel, ye've been to sea, dear?"

"Aye, when I was a lad."

"Was it for long?"

"No, not long, two years sailin' with cargoes between our coast and Ireland."

"Did ye learn much of the ways of sailor-folk?"

"Aye, much."

"Runnin' up an' down the ropes?"

"Aye, that, an' more too."

"Did ye learn tattooin', dear?"

"Aye, the marks ye've seen on my arms an old salt taught me to do. The sailors were clever with the needle, sketchin' as well as sewin'."

"Do ye think ye could sketch a star now, Ariel, or have ye forgotten?"

Ariel laughed, partly with pleasure at this talk by the fire, partly from joy in the companionship.

"Aye, I'm thinkin' I could, little lamb."

He drew his chair closer to hers and saw her face brighten; it rested her to have him near her, and her thoughts sped back through all the years of loneliness and hunger for the things she could not have; she had a new consciousness of life and of being useful; it was not merely

Ariel, it was the house, too, and what she could do to make it—Well, the word escaped her ; anyway it was the house as well as Ariel, and it was lovely to think of what she could do for it while he made poetry and sold things in the shop.

"An', Ariel, could ye sketch me an anchor an' a bit of rope ? "

"Aye, dearie, I could ; ye know I could anyway, for I had drawin' at the school in Carnarvon while I was an apprentice there."

"Drawin' ? "

"Aye, it was mam's idea."

Janny's eyes grew large.

"Ariel, do ye—do ye—think ye could draw me a—a cat ? "

Ariel took one look at Janny and burst into laughter ; shop, poetry, everything was forgotten in his amusement at her childlike eagerness. Suddenly he stopped, for Janny's face was quivering. Aye, he had forgotten, too, that this was no peasant-woman ; his laughter seemed brutal.

"Janny, little lamb," he said softly, drawing her head to him, "I could, dear, I'll sketch all the cats ye want."

Janny sighed comfortably, her head still upon his shoulder, the weariness easing away from

her heart. She could do it now ; it would make the greatest difference ; Betto Griffiths and others should see that she was something more than a bit of porcelain in Ariel's home, that she could do something more than merely oversee house-cleaning. Besides, it really was something more, —it was having an idea of her own, and that until Ariel rescued her she had never been allowed to have. She reached up and patted his face ; even her gestures were incomprehensibly child-like. What she lacked in the passion of a woman she seemed to make up in the perfect trust of a child. Ariel, selfish with the selfishness of a man who has lived by himself and who had lived much in his own mind, thought now with a pang how lonely Janny must have been ever since she came to him ; the appeal of her confidence touched the best that was in him, the protection that was his to give her, and some potential sense of fatherhood. Aye, he knew how tired she was after the life that lay behind her, and he gathered her into his arms, holding her there quietly while he talked.

"What shall it be, Janny? A star, an anchor, a bit of rope, an' a cat, did ye say, dear?"

"Aye, a star, Ariel, please. I don't think I want the anchor. The bit of rope would be nice, dear. An' I'd like the cat."

"An' what are ye goin' to do with these drawin's, Janny? Are ye goin' to hang them on the wall?"

"No, I'm not goin' to do that."

"Well, it's just as well, dearie, for Betto Griffiths, an' Mrs. Gomer Roberts the tinman, an' Mrs. Parry Winn the baker, would be hauntin' Ty Mawr. But what *are* ye goin' to do with them, dearie?"

"Ariel, I couldn't say *now*." Janny stirred uneasily. "I *might* be hangin' them in our bedroom, an'—an'—an' I might be puttin'—puttin' them in the—Bible to press. They'd be useful."

"Aye, that's so. An' how large shall I draw them?"

Janny thought a minute.

"The cat, dear, I'd like about a foot long, that is from his tail to his whiskers—No, I'm thinkin' that's too narrow for the cat; from the tail to the whiskers I'd like him one foot an' a half, Ariel."

Janny's glance took a flight over Ariel's shoulder.

"An' the star?"

Janny thought again.

"Six inches from point to point, an' four stars—no—one star will do—I can cut—och? —Ariel, *one* star, please."

"An' the rope?"

"It's the twisted kind I want, an' it must go all around the—Oh, dear! Ariel, about an inch wide, please."

"Good! one cat, one star, one inch rope. Anything more, little lamb?"

"No-o-o, could ye do it now?"

"Aye, dearie, fetch me the ruler, the paper, an' a pencil."

So Janny watched Ariel's thin fingers work skilfully, swiftly with the pencil, the ruler measuring off star points and a cat's length as carefully as if the paper were Welsh flannel worth one-and-six a yard. And the next night, after a day of unusual elation of feeling, Janny, when sleep had come to Ariel, stole noiselessly from the marital side, crept to the whitewashed wall of their bedroom pallid in moonshine, felt for the white paper cat and star and length of rope hanging there indiscernible, caught the edge of the paper with her fingers as she felt about, unpinned the pieces, and tiptoed out of the room and down the stairway. As she moved about the sitting-room in her night-gown, she looked pathetically little, the flush in her cheeks marking her eager helplessness. Much had slipped by her, and she had lost much in that sorry life before Ariel took her and brought her

JANNY WATCHED ARIEL'S THIN FINGERS WORK SKILLFULLY

To face page 106.

to live among strangers, whose motives and feelings she had no means of penetrating. But the tenderness, the innocence, the expectancy of childhood had remained with her, as if making amends for her loss or awaiting the sunshine of maturing impulses. She set a candle beside the settle, lifted the cover, took out two long rolls of paper, closed the settle, and bore her parcels to the table. Then she untied them with trembling fingers, rolling out several feet of green and crimson paper and a small sheet of yellow. She placed weights on the corners of the lengths, pausing to run her fingers into her hair as she gazed with rapt eyes upon the coloured surfaces, commonplace enough to all appearances. She took the cat, laid it carefully on the crimson, pinned it down and pencilled around the edges. In the same fashion she drew the outlines for four yellow stars and some lengths of yellow rope. Finally, with a pair of shears she cut out all the outlined figures. She lifted the cat, freed now from the matrix of surrounding paper and enlivened with the lifelikeness of a new liberty, and held its foot and a half of length against the candle-light. The light shone through the crimson paper but dimly. Janny nodded, took a small cake of paraffin, melted it, and with a bit of cloth sponged the cat as it lay upon the

table. This she did also to the four yellow stars, to the lengths of rope, and to a large piece of green paper upon which the original cat pattern had been appliquéd. Once more she lifted the crimson animal to the light,—the candle-flame shone through clearly with a beautiful crimson flood of softer light. After this Janny broke a half-dozen eggs, separating the white from the yolk. Her fingers worked feverishly now, and her eyes kept measuring distances; in her nervous haste there were moments when she seemed hardly able to accomplish the next step forward in the task she saw already complete in her mind's eye. She stopped to listen for sounds and steps as she worked, and again and again she imagined that Ariel was looking down from the head of the staircase. But she finished the work uninterrupted, and with a sigh, half-sob of weariness, half-contentment, and with many a glance of admiration as she went, she tiptoed up the stairway. Ariel was sleeping, and as she crept into bed she put out a hand to touch his thick black hair, and then, curling into the cool white of her pillow, fell asleep as children sleep, one hand resting lightly on his arm.

Ariel Jenkins awoke at the waking-time of all Glaslyn—the dawn; Janny lay beside him, still sleeping, her face heavily shadowed in her

abundant hair. She seemed so wistfully child-like and her closed eyes so unforgettably weary. Perhaps it was merely the shadows of the early dawn and her hair, but the eyelids had a kind of veined transparency and her skin a transparent pallor, and the mouth drooped. Ariel's selfishness smote him consciously; he thought with a pang of Janny, and he made resolutions. With this awakening he transferred a little of his poetry from the bard to the man. Aye, he acknowledged to himself, this might well be called the Education of Ariel Jenkins, bard and merchant. And for the first time a thought that gripped his heart brought him no desire to turn it into rhyme. He recalled compassionately all her efforts to make improvements in the house, her evident inability to understand and cope with the shrewd Welsh women of their village; and he remembered with fear the prying curiosity and overt enmity these women had shown toward Janny. Then he wondered in a desultory way what she was planning to do with the stars and the cat and the bits of rope. And after she awakened and they were talking at breakfast, he reflected how easily his resolution won success, for Janny since he brought her to Glaslyn had not been as buoyant, almost animated, as she was this morning. Ariel thought, too,

that he had not noticed before the way Janny had of looking at him, as if she expected him to discover some extraordinary joy; maybe she was merely looking to him for happiness, but certainly there was an air of anticipation about her to-day.

Upon finishing breakfast Ariel passed with a sense of secure well-being into his shop; so many problems were solving themselves, and on the whole the man made him happier than the bard. Even the flag sidewalk outside the shop seemed more than ordinarily lively and merry to-day. He saw neighbours passing and heard them chatting, and once in a while there was a loud shout of laughter. Across the street, looking towards his shop he beheld a little knot of men,—Ivor Jones and Wil Penmorfa and Parry Wynn,—men who did not usually have time for mirth so early in the morning. They were talking and laughing, and Ariel saw one of them point towards Ty Mawr. Just then Mrs. Gomer Roberts the tinman came in. She wanted some flannel for a blouse like the material she was wearing, and Mrs. Roberts threw back her long cloak to display the neat striped flannel. How was Mrs. Jenkins? Ariel thanked her: Janny was well.

"I'm comin' soon to have a good long visit with her," said Mrs. Roberts.

"Aye, ye'll be welcome."

"Ye're makin' improvements, I see."

"Aye, a few," replied Ariel, using his yard-stick deftly and wondering what improvements Mrs. Gomer Roberts could have had any opportunity to see.

"Glaslyn's no seen anything like it," continued Mrs. Roberts, straightening her beaver hat over the crisp white of her cap.

"No, I'm thinkin' not," answered Ariel vaguely, rolling up the bundle of flannel with precise neatness.

He was still wondering why women talked in riddles when in came Mrs. Jeezer Morris the minister. She had torn her blue kirtle and wanted a new breadth. Ariel took down the cloth. Then were showered upon him in a compacter form, and one of greater authority, practically the same remarks as those made by Mrs. Gomer Roberts: How was Mrs. Jenkins, she was coming to visit her, there were improvements she saw, the like of which Glaslyn had not seen before. Mrs. Morris the minister had scarcely finished her purchase when in came Mrs. Parry Wynn the baker; they had apparently met that morning and their greetings were purely conventional,—a smile, a look of inquiry, a nod of negation. Mrs. Parry Wynn wanted some

new cotton cloth, but apparently she also wished to make the same remarks as those made by Mrs. Gomer Roberts and Mrs. Jeezer Morris.

Then Ariel Jenkins's thoughts began the converging process, began to gather in towards some definite centre, to fix themselves upon some one thing which all these estimable women must have in mind. And when Mrs. Parry Wynn left the shop, Ariel went to the door. Betto Griffiths walked by briskly, joining the women who had just made purchases and who were gathered in a little group opposite Ty Mawr. They were looking eagerly at the house and gesticulating. Betto Griffiths laughed harshly as she pointed at Ty Mawr, and shrugged her shoulders in the direction of the shop. Ariel's heart sank. What had Janny done to make the house such an object of attraction? He stepped out to the little group of customers and looked up.

Except for the quick flexing of the muscles in his forehead and the dilation of his eyes Ariel betrayed no emotion. The oriel window jutting over the street had been transformed; he saw no longer the clear glass of the stairway-light common to Ty Mawr and the other houses of Glaslyn, but a crimson cat, fore-feet in air, blazoned on a green background, each quarter of the oriel brilliant with a yellow star

BETTO GRIFFITHS LAUGHED

To face page 112.

and the whole device bound together with a chaplet of rope.

"It *does* make a pretty light!" he exclaimed thoughtfully; "prettier," he added with pride, "than I had any idea it would."

The women stared at him.

"Aye, an' it's prettier within," he continued; "it sheds such a bright colour on dark days."

"No, is it so!" ejaculated Mrs. Parry Wynn.

"Aye, it is so," replied Ariel. "Out of Glaslyn ye see many coloured windows like this in private houses—smart houses of course."

"Just fancy!" responded Mrs. Jeezer Morris, "we've seen them in churches, the Nonconformists as well as the Established, but we've never heard of coloured windows before in a village house, especially not with such a cat——"

"Aye, the cat!" interrupted Ariel, in a caressing voice, the far-away, much-reverenced look of the poet in his eyes, "that cat is a copy from a—medal taken from—the sar-coph-a-gus of Tiglath Pileser II. Aye," he added dreamily, "the cat, the sacred symbol of Egypt, holy to the Muses, beloved of——"

"Mr. Jenkins, ye don't say so!" they all exclaimed, looking with curious glances at the oriel window.

"I will say," nodded Mrs. Gomer Roberts, "that it has an uncommonly intelligent look."

"Aye, so it has," agreed Mrs. Parry Wynn, "intelligent an'—an'—lively."

Betto Griffiths glanced about the little group shrewdly.

"An' the stars, Mr. Jenkins?" she said.

"Tut, the *star!* Betto Griffiths, ye don't say ye don't know the meanin' of the five-pointed star, sacred to history, to sacred history, guide in the——"

"Oh, aye!" interrupted Betto, "if *that's* the star ye mean, I certainly do."

The little gathering took a fresh look at the window; their eyes lingered reverently now on the emblazoned group of cat and stars leashed together with yellow rope.

"Aye, it's a wonderful idea!" asserted Mrs. Jeezer Morris, from her superior position and knowledge.

"Aye, wonderful!" solemnly affirmed the rest.

"I'm thinkin'," said Betto Griffiths, an undisciplined look in her eyes, "Mrs. Jenkins made it?"

"Mrs. Jenkins! Oh, no!" exclaimed Ariel, thrusting his hands into his trousers pockets, "I did it."

"Ye did!" they all exclaimed, admiringly.

"Mr. Jenkins," continued Mrs. Parry Wynn, whose husband, the baker, had been standing across the street not more than a half-hour ago laughing over the crimson cat *rampant*, blazoned on the green field, "Mr. Jenkins, if Mr. Wynn thinks he could afford something like it, would ye be willin'——"

"Aye, gladly," returned Ariel, "but it's expensive, Mrs. Wynn."

"Oh!" chorused the women, in deferential voices.

"But I'm thinkin'," continued Ariel, "through my connection as a merchant I might be able to obtain the material at less expense an'——"

"If ye could!" clamoured the little group.

"Mr. Jenkins, if Mr. Roberts——" broke in Mrs. Roberts.

"Mr. Jenkins, if Mr. Morris——" interrupted Mrs. Morris.

"Won't ye come in?" asked Ariel, placidly interrupting them all. "I'm certain ye will like the light even better from the inside where it falls in such pleasin' colours on the landin'. When I was workin' on it last night by moonlight the colours were like fairyland."

"Aye, it's only a poet could have conceived this," said Mrs. Morris, with assurance, "only a poet!"

"Only a poet!" echoed the rest.

"But won't ye come in? Mrs. Jenkins will be glad to see ye."

"Aye, thank ye, 'twould be a pleasure!" And flock-like they followed Ariel into the house.

Mrs. Jenkins's eyes were red, and there was the furtive aspect of a trapped animal about her; but when she saw their eager faces and heard their enthusiastic and admiring exclamations as they crowded into the stairway landing, there was a look of surprise first, and then of delight upon her face.

"Mr. Jenkins tells me ye didn't make it yourself," said Betto Griffiths, suspicion still on her sharp features.

"Well, it came," replied Janny, glancing appealingly at Ariel, "it—came from Liverpool."

"Janny *dear*," corrected Ariel, with a look straight into her eyes, "ye mean the *material* did."

"Aye, Ariel," answered Janny, with a mixture of childlike obedience and confusion, "aye, just the material."

Ariel talked a great deal; the window was admired, commented upon, there were demands for future assistance, envious exclamations of

delight to Mrs. Jenkins, who was given no chance to say a word, and the little group departed.

"Well, Janny!" exclaimed Ariel.

"Ariel *dear*, I—I saw them—them laughin' an'—then—ye," the flood-gates burst and Janny threw herself sobbing into Ariel's arms.

"There, there, *dear*, little lamb!" he comforted, his own eyes wet with tears.

"I thought — thought it would — be so — pretty — an' people's been — expectin' me — to — to make changes — an' — an' — Betto Griffiths said improvements, an' Ariel — I — I——" Janny's voice caught and she sobbed afresh.

"Tut, tut, little lamb, dearie, don't. Janny, Janny, don't cry."

"Ariel, I saw—the—men—laughin' an'—an' slappin' their knees—an'—an' pointin' at the window—an' even—little Silvan runnin' by—laughed, an' then when Betto Griffiths——" Janny faltered, gulping.

"Pooh, little lamb, Betto Griffiths!" exclaimed Ariel derisively, "Betto Griffiths is an ignorant woman. An', dearie, didn't ye hear them all askin' me to help them to get windows like this?"

"But, Ariel, didn't ye laugh at all?"

"I laugh, Janny! Why, dear," answered Ariel slowly, "I think — the — window — is beautiful!"

"Oh, Ariel!" said Janny happily.

"Aye, I do; only if ye should have another idea, just tell me about it, dearie, beforehand, for it might—perhaps it wouldn't," he added gently, "make it awkward."

"But, Ariel, I saw——"

"Well, dear, that's enough—ye don't understand these people quite yet. The window is beautiful; aye," he continued, "I like it, so we'll be sendin' it to Liverpool to get a real stained-glass window something the same—aye, dearie, I can well afford it."

The Child

The Child

THE irons of the fireplace glowed in the light of the steady peat-fire. The odour from the peat was delicious with the aroma of age-old forests. With this was mingled the odour of the supper Jane Morris was clearing away. As she moved nimbly about the table, Jane's shadow advanced and withdrew across the blackened rafters of the roof.

"Whoo-o!" said Tom, comfortably, at the sound of the wind booming down the rocky mountain-side. "'Tis a bad night for strangers to be abroad, bad to be wandering along Bryn Bannog."

"Aye, 'tis dark," answered Owen, removing his pipe, and rubbing the head of a pet lamb that lay beside him. "One minute it cries like a child, and another it wails like a demon. But 'tis snug within, lad, an' we'll never know want."

The bachelor brothers regarded each other and their sister with contentment. Outside the wind shouted and cried by turns, and then died away clamorously in the deep valley.

"Snug within, lad," reaffirmed Owen, drawing his harp to him.

Tom lifted his finger.

"Hush! Some one comes."

All listened while the wind beat upon the house and sobbed piteously in the chimney. Jane hastened to the door.

"God's blessin'—rest—on this house!" gasped a man, stumbling in.

"Take the stranger's cloak off," commanded Owen, before the visitor was in, "an' here's my clogs dry an' warm."

"Tut, tut," objected Jane, "'tis food he needs, whatever. I'll fetch him bread an' fill the big pint. Now, friend, this chair by the table."

The Stranger sat down; his deep-set eyes looked out wistfully on the awakened bustle, and on the warmth and the cheer of the cottage room. But they heard him whisper drearily, "My little child, my little child!"

Tom tried to lift the silence that was settling over them all with a question here and a question there. The Stranger ate absent-mindedly and ravenously, drinking his ale in greedy draughts. Owen knocked the ashes from his pipe and stared into the fire.

"'Tis late," he said.

The Stranger lifted his eyes, looked at the two brothers, and long at Jane.

"I shall not rest——" he began.

"Well, Stranger, that you will not with a burden on your mind. That's so, lad?" Tom asked, turning to Owen.

"I shall not rest till I have told my dream," he resumed. "All day and every day my little one lies on her back—the crooked back that is killin' her."

"Dear *anwyl!*" exclaimed Owen to Jane and Tom, "'tis very like his little one."

"Aye, lad," answered Jane, while the wind drew gently over the house-roof.

"The dream came many times an' I did not heed it."

"He who follows dreams follows fools," interrupted Tom.

"I am a poor man, with naught richer than dreams to follow, an' no mother for my child. If the dream prove true, gold would make my little one well. But the days are goin' fast an' she is weaker every day."

"Och!" sighed Jane.

"Tut, a dream come true!" scoffed Tom, laughing. "But what *was* your dream?" he asked, leaning forward.

"It was of a pitcherful of gold hid beneath a ruin of rocks piled one upon another, an' it was near a great fortress built in a fashion un-

known to me. The fortress was on the crown of a rugged hill, an' it seemed away from the sea. So I have travelled eastward."

"Pen y Gaer!" exclaimed Owen and Tom and Jane, looking at one another.

"An' in this dream I saw many strange things, garments unlike aught men wear now."

"Aye," agreed Jane, "but it was all a dream."

"Nay, nay," replied the Stranger, "can you not tell me of it?"

"That we can," said Owen.

"Tut," interrupted Tom, "there is a round tower, aye, two round towers, the one by Pen y Gaer, south-west over Bryn Bannog, down the bridle-path by Llyn Cwm-y-stradlyn."

"Aye, but, lad," objected Owen, "the other——"

"The other's further away, more like a sheep-pen once than a tower for any fortress."

Owen's face was perplexed, but Tom's calm, and his eyes keen with light.

"Rest here, Stranger," he said. "On the morrow you shall start out for your treasure, up over Bryn Bannog."

"Nay, Tom," interrupted Owen, but Tom silenced him.

The next morning Tom stood outside the hedge that enclosed their grey-stone mountain cottage, pointing with his finger.

"Well, more to the west, so."

"Aye," replied the Stranger, scanning Bryn Bannog, its steep meadows, its rocks tufted with golden gorse, its craggy spine from which the mist was lifting; "yes, the path is plain."

The Stranger set his eyes southward up the mountain. After a while he turned to look back at the cottage cradled in the fields below; beyond the valley, Moelwyn, massive and green; eastward, Cynicht, sharp and grey; and still farther east, a vast wilderness of crag tumbled hither and thither down to the very edge of the glimmering sea. "Hope goes with me, little one," he said, and turned to climb higher. At the summit he looked westward; there lay a lake blue as a meadow-flower, and half-way down, by the little brook Tom had described, there was a large circle of loose stones.

The Stranger hurried forward. He glanced at the sun, and began by the edge of the circle near the brook, turning up the soggy earth in large clods. He dug feverishly, working hour after hour. He lay down and pulled the earth away in rolls, the wet drenching him, still hoping against hope. He took the clods of earth and dashed them against the rocks where they broke noiselessly. He looked about as if praying that some power might come to him from the blue

distance or the sky above or the golden sun; then he sank on the stones and wept. The little green snake that crept by in the grass, the snail that trailed over the sod, heard him weep, and the cry that came from him, "My little one, my little one, was it for this?"

The afternoon swung its shadows eastward, and the roof of the cottage lay in a pointed figure on the grass beyond the hedge. Two men bearing something toiled up the path to the hedge gate. As the sun set behind Bryn Bannog the pointed roof-shadow drew in, and the shadow from the hedge lay on the grass in a dark ribbon, growing narrower and fainter. From the distant summit a single figure dropped slowly downhill, the autumn dusk closing around it. In the windows candle-light flickered; a woman came to the west door and looked uphill. She seemed troubled and she had been crying.

"Brothers, he is comin'," called Jane, "he is close by the house. Och, be kind to him for the child's sake! It is not too late even now."

"Well, Stranger," said Tom, appearing at the door, "did you find aught?"

"Nay," replied the Stranger, in a level voice. "Is there another ruin where the dream might lie?"

"Dreams!" exclaimed Tom cheerily, "dreams,

dreams! 'Tis no place for dreams. You will find nothin' but sheep bones buried on Bryn Bannog. Do you know of any other place, Owen?"

Owen took his pipe from his mouth, looked hard at his brother, hard at the Stranger, started to speak, changed his mind, and put the pipe in his mouth again.

"Will you come in an' rest?" asked Tom. "'Tis growin' dark."

"My way is long, westward over the hills, an' the child is waitin'."

"Here," said Tom, holding out a coin, "here is a crown for the little Flower."

"Nay," replied the Stranger gently, "it would avail nothin'. She hath need of many crowns. Good-night."

As the Stranger took the path downhill, the brothers turned indoors. Jane confronted them, her eyes indignant, her lips tense.

"You—you will go after him. Och, that I should live to see this day! The Lord will find you out."

Tom laughed.

"Set the candle on the table," he said; "'tis an odd box. Is the door fast, Owen?"

"Aye, fast."

"To think it's lain in our pastures these hundreds of years."

Tom undid the hasps. He lifted out one chalice of silver after another, and several silver plates, all marked with early dates. Tom looked disappointed; Owen's face had grown pallid. Jane was speaking to them both :—

"'Tis the lost church silver, the altar-service, aye, the holy altar-service; now what will you do?" she cried.

At the breakfast table the porridge was eaten in silence. Jane's eyes were red. Tom looked uneasy, and Owen stared into his dish. In vain Gwennie thrust her little white nose against Owen's leg. "Baa-a!" Still no attention.

"I'm glad the wind is quiet," said Jane.

There was no response.

"Did you sleep, Tom?" she asked.

"Sleep! With that shriekin' of the wind!"

"Nay," said Owen softly, "the cryin' of a little child, indeed."

"There *was* no gold, I say," Tom asserted.

"True," Owen complied.

"Well, 'twas altar silver, whatever."

"Aye," assented Jane, "an' it must go back to the church."

"Yes, an' we're no richer," ended Tom. "We've nothin' to spare to a stranger an' his child."

Owen turned the leaves of the big Bible on the table. Tom was staring defiantly from Jane to Owen.

"'It were better a millstone'—" Owen began to read to himself.

"The devil!" shouted Tom, rushing from the table and slamming the door behind him.

Owen went out after him. Their work for that day lay in the sheep-pens by the brook, washing and shearing the sheep. Before him Tom was walking very fast and talking in a loud, angry voice. But Owen was thinking of the sound of the wind as it cried and whimpered and pleaded all night long. And the flowers he saw in the grass at his feet made him think of big eyes; and the sheen on the grass, of a child's hair; and the slender birch-wands, of a child's little body. What would it have been like to have had such a little one a part of him? And supposing it had lain crumpled together like yonder fern—Owen's heart gave a great leap.

Tom was still talking when he reached the sheepfold. The anger had left his face, and in its stead there was uneasy inquiry. Owen, without looking at his brother, took his seat on the shearing-stool and the shepherd carried a sheep to him. Owen turned it deftly. Clip, clip, clip, the fleece began to roll back from the

shears and the skin to show pink through the stubble of remaining fleece. Clip! a deft turn to right, then to left, and the fleece slipped to the ground and lay there, white, and with arms outstretched.

"Och!" exclaimed Owen, staring at it, "I'm goin' westward to the child, tell Jane."

"I'm goin', too," called Tom, walking after him rapidly, grumbling and talking, "an' I'll not tell Jane. There's no need to go so fast, whatever."

Jane came to the door of the cottage and looked down to the roadway. Gwennie was beside her and caught sight of Owen. "Baa-a!" the lamb bleated, scampering downhill.

"Gwennie, Gwennie!" called Jane.

But the stiff little legs were taking the hillside in leaps and bounds.

"Gwennie, *bach*, Gwen*nie*, Gwennie bach!"

Jane started downhill after the lamb. "If they're goin'," she said to herself, with a shrewd look of understanding, "indeed, I'm goin' too."

"Baa-a!" bleated Gwennie, with little frisks and skips to right and left.

An
All-Hallows'
Honeymoon

An All-Hallows' Honeymoon

INTERMITTENTLY the wind whined and raced, howling like a wolf, through the Gwynen Valley; and intermittently, too, the rain doused the bridge on whose slate coping Vavasour Jones leaned. It was a night when spirits of air and earth, the racing wind, the thundering water, the slashing rain, were the very soul of this chaos of noise. Still, cosy lights shone on either side of the bridge, the lights of Ty Ucha and Ty Usaf, where a good mug of beer could be had for a mere song to a man of Vavasour's means. And the lights from all the cottages, too, for it was All-Hallows' Eve, twinkled with festive brilliance upon the drenched flags of the street. Indeed, there was not one of these houses in all Gwynen whose walls and flaggings were not familiar to him, where Vavasour Jones and his wife Catherine had not been on an occasion, a knitting-night, a Christmas, a bidding, a funeral, an All-Hallows' Eve. But to-night his eyes gazed blankly upon these preliminary signs of a merry evening within doors, and he seemed

unconscious of the rain pouring upon him and the wind slapping the bridge. He moved when he saw a figure approaching.

"Hist! Eilir!"

"Aye, man, who is it?"

"It's me, it's Vavasour Jones."

"Dear me, lad, what do ye here in the dark and rain?"

Vavasour said nothing; Eilir peered more closely at him. "Are ye sick, lad?"

"Och, I'm not sick!" Vavasour's voice rang drearily, as if that were the least of ills that could befall him.

"Well, what ails ye?"

"It's All-Hallows' Eve an'——"

"Aren't ye goin' to Pally Hughes's?"

"Ow!" he moaned, "the devil! goin' to Pally Hughes's while it's drawin' nearer an' nearer an'—Ow!"

"Tut, man," said Eilir sharply, "ye're ill; speak up, tell me what ails ye."

"Ow-w!" groaned Vavasour.

Eilir drew away; here was a case where All-Hallows' had played havoc early in the evening. What should he do? Get him home? Notify Catherine? Have the minister? He was inclining to the last resource when Vavasour groaned again and spoke:—

"Eilir, I wisht I were dead, man."

"Dear me, lad, what is it?"

"It's the night when Catherine must go."

"When Catherine must go? What do ye mean?"

"She'll be dead the night at twelve."

"Dead at twelve?" asked Eilir, bewildered. "Does she know it?"

"No, but I do, an' to think I've been unkind to her! I've tried this year to make up for it, but it's no use, man; one year'll never make up for ten of harsh words an' unkind deeds. Ow!" groaned Vavasour, collapsing on to the slate coping once more.

"Well, ye've not been good to her," replied Eilir, mystified, "that's certain, man, but I've heard ye've been totally different the past year. Griffiths was sayin' he never heard any more sharp words comin' from your windows, an' they used to rain like hail on the streets some days."

"Aye, but a year'll not do any good, an' she'll be dyin' at twelve to-night, Ow!"

"Well," said Eilir, catching at the only thing he could think of to say, "there's plenty in the Scriptures about a man an' his wife."

"Aye, but it'll not do, not do, not do," sobbed Vavasour Jones.

"Have ye been drinkin', lad?"

"Drinkin'!" exclaimed Jones.

"Well, no harm, but lad, about the Scriptures; there's plenty in the Scriptures concernin' a man an' his wife, an' ye've broken much of it about lovin' a wife, an' yet I cannot understand why Catherine's goin' an' where."

"She's not goin' anywhere, Eilir; she'll be dyin' at twelve."

Whereupon Vavasour Jones rose up suddenly from the coping, took a step forward, seized Eilir by the coat-lapel, and, with eyes flickering like coals in the dark, told his story. All the little Gwynen world knew that he and his wife had not lived happily or well together; there had been no children coming and no love lost, and, as the days went on, bickering, scolding, harsh words, and even ugly actions. Aye, and it had come to such a pass that a year ago this night, on All-Hallows' Eve, he had gone down to the church-porch shortly before midnight to see whether the spirit of Catherine would be called, and whether she would live the twelve months out. And as he was leaning against the church-wall hoping, aye, man, and praying that he might see her there, he saw something coming around the corner with white over its head; it drew nearer and nearer, and when it came in full view of the church-porch

it paused, it whirled around, and sped away with the wind flapping about its feet and the rain beating down on its head. But Vavasour had time to see that it was the spirit of Catherine, and he was glad because his prayer had been answered, and because, with Catherine dying the next All-Hallows', they would have to live together only the year out. So he went homeward joyfully, thinking it was the last year, and considering as it was the last year he might just as well be as kind and pleasant as possible. When he reached home he found Catherine up waiting for him. And she spoke so pleasantly to him and he to her, and the days went on as happily as the courting days before they were married. Each day was sweeter than the one before, and they knew for the first time what it meant to be man and wife in love and kindness. But all the while he saw that white figure by the churchyard, and Catherine's face in its white hood, and he knew the days were lessening and that she must go. Here it was All-Hallows' Eve again, and but four hours to midnight, and the best year of his life was almost past. Aye, and it was all the result of his evil heart and evil wish and evil prayer.

"Think, man," groaned Vavasour, "prayin' for her callin', aye, goin' there hopin' ye'd see her spirit, an' countin' on her death!"

"Oh, man, it's bad," replied Eilir mournfully, "aye, an' I've no word to say to ye for comfort. I recollect well the story my granny used to tell about Christmas Powell; it was somethin' the same. An' there was Betty Williams was called ten years ago, an' didn't live the year out; an' there was Silvan Evans, the sexton, an' Geffery his friend, was called two years ago, and Silvan had just time to dig Geffrey's grave an' then his own, too, by its side, an' they was buried the same day an' hour."

"Ow!" wailed Vavasour.

"Aye, man, it's bad; it'll have to be endured, an' to think ye brought it on yourself. Where's Catherine?"

"She's to Pally Hughes's for the All-Hallows' party."

"Och, she'll be taken there!"

"Aye, an' oh! Eilir, she was loth to go to Pally's, but I could not tell her the truth."

"That's so, lad; are ye not goin'?"

"I cannot go; I'm fair crazy an' I'll just be creepin' home, waitin' for them to bring her back. Ow!"

"I'm sorry, man," called Eilir, looking after him with an expression of sympathy: "I can be of no use to ye now."

Across the bridge the windows of Pally

Hughes's grey-stone cottage shone with candles, and as the doors swung to and fro admitting guests, the lights from within flickered on the brass doorsill and the hum of merry words reached the street. Mrs. Morgan the baker, dressed in her new scarlet whittle and a freshly starched cap, was there ; Mr. Howell the milliner, in his highlows and wonderful plum-coloured coat ; Mrs. Jenkins the tinman, with bright new ribbons to her cap and a new beaver hat which she removed carefully upon entering ; and Mr. Wynn "the shop," whose clothes were always the envy of Gwynen village ; and many others, big-eyed girls and straight young men, who crossed the bright doorsill.

Finally, Catherine Jones tapped on the door. Within, she looked vacantly at the candles on the mantelpiece and on the table, all set in festoons of evergreens and flanked by a display of painted china eggs and animals ; and at the lights shining steadily, while on the hearth a fire crackled. Catherine, so heavy was her heart, could scarcely manage a decent friendly greeting to old Pally Hughes, her hostess. She looked uncheered at the big centre table, whereon stood a huge blue wassail-bowl, about it little piles of raisins, buns, spices, biscuits, sugar, a large jug of ale and a small bottle tightly corked. She

watched the merriment with indifference ; bobbing for apples and sixpences seemed such stupid games. There was no one in whom she could confide now, and anyway it was too late ; there was nothing to be done, and while they were talking lightly and singing, too, for the harp was being played, the hours were slipping away, and her one thought, her only thought, was to get home to Vavasour. "Oh," reflected Catherine, "I'm a wicked, wicked woman to be bringin' him to his death!"

The candles were blown out and the company gathered in a circle about the fire to tell stories, while a kettle of ale simmered on the crane and the apples hung roasting. Pally began the list of tales. There was the story of the corpse-candle Lewis's wife saw, and how Lewis himself died the next week ; there were the goblins that of All-Hallows' Eve led Davies such a dance, and the folks had to go out after him with a lantern to fetch him in, and found him lying in fear by the sheep-wall ; and there were the plates and mugs Annie turned upside down and an unseen visitor turned them right side up before her very eyes.

Then they began to throw nuts in the fire, each with a wish : if the nut burned brightly the wish would come true. Old Pally threw on a nut, it flickered and then blazed up ; Maggie

tossed one into the fire, it smouldered and gave no light. Gradually the turn came nearer Catherine; there was but one wish in her heart and she trembled to take the chance.

"Now, Catherine!"

"Aye, Catherine, what'll she be wishin' for, a new lover?" they laughed.

With shaking hand she tossed hers into the fire; the nut sputtered and blackened, and with a shriek Catherine bounded from the circle, threw open the door and sped into the dark. In consternation the company scrambled to their feet, gazing at the open door through which volleyed the wind and rain.

Old Pally was the first to speak: "'Tis a bad sign."

"Aye, poor Catherine's been called, it may be."

"It's the last time, I'm thinkin', we'll ever see her."

"Do ye think she saw somethin', Pally, do ye?"

"There's no tellin'; but it's bad, very bad, though her nut is burnin' brightly enough now."

"She seemed downcast the night, not like herself."

"It can be nothin' at home, for Vavasour, they say, is treatin' her better nor ever, an' she's been that sweet-tempered the year long, which is uncommon for her."

As she fled homeward through the dark, little did Catherine think of what they might be saying at Pally's. When Vavasour heard feet running swiftly along the street, he straightened up, his eyes in terror upon the door.

"Catherine!" he cried, bewildered at her substantial appearance, "is it ye who are really come?"

There was a momentary suggestion of a rush into each other's arms checked, as it were, in mid-air by Vavasour's reseating himself precipitately and Catherine drawing herself up.

"Yes," said Catherine, seeing him there and still in the flesh, "it was—dull, very dull at Pally's; an' my feet was wet an' I feared takin' a cold."

"Aye," replied Vavasour, looking with greed upon her rosy face and snapping eyes, "aye, it's better for ye here, dearie."

There was an awkward silence. Catherine still breathed heavily from the running, and Vavasour shuffled his feet. He opened his mouth, shut it, and opened it again.

"Did ye have a fine time at Pally's?" he asked.

"Aye, it was gay and fine an'—na——" Catherine halted, remembering the reason she had given for coming home, and tried to explain. "Yes, so it was, an' so it wasn't," she ended.

Vavasour regarded her with attention, and there was another pause, in which his eyes sought

the clock. The sight of that fat-faced timepiece gave him a shock.

"A quarter past eleven," he murmured; then aloud: "Catherine, do ye recall Pastor Evans's sermon, the one he preached last New Year?"

Catherine also had taken a furtive glance at the clock, a glance which Vavasour caught and wondered at.

"Well, Catherine, do——"

"Aye, I remember, about inheritin' the grace of life together."

"My dear, wasn't he sayin' that love is eternal an' that—a man—an'—an' his wife was lovin' for—for——"

"Aye, lad, for everlastin' life," Catherine concluded.

There was another pause, a quick glancing at the clock, and a quick swinging of two pairs of eyes towards each other, astonishment in each pair.

"Half-after eleven," whispered Vavasour, seeming to crumple in the middle. "An,' dear," he continued aloud, "didn't he, didn't he say that the Lord was mindful of our—of our—difficulties, and our temptations, an' our—our——"

"Aye, an' our mistakes," ended Catherine.

"Do ye think, dearie, he went on, "that if a man were to—to—na—to be unkind a—a very little to his wife—an' was sorry an' his wife—his wife—died, that he'd be—be——?"

"Forgiven?" finished Catherine. "Aye, I'm thinkin' so. An', lad dear, do ye think if anythin' was to happen to ye the night,—aye, *this* night,—that ye'd take any grudge away with ye against me?"

Vavasour stiffened.

"Happen to *me*, Catherine?"

Then he collapsed, groaning.

"Oh, dearie, what is it, what is it, what ails ye?" cried Catherine, coming to his side on the sofa.

"Nothin', nothin' at all," he gasped, slanting an eye at the clock. "Ow, the devil, it's twenty minutes before twelve!"

"Oh, lad, what is it?"

"It's nothin', nothin' at all, it's—it's—ow!—it's just a little pain across me."

Catherine stole a look at the timepiece,—a quarter before twelve, aye, it was coming to him now, and her face whitened to the colour of the ashes in the fireplace.

To Vavasour the whimpering of the wind in the chimney was like the bare nerve of his pain. Even the flickering of the flame marked the flight of time, which he could not stay by any wish or power in him. Only ten minutes more, aye, everything marked it: the brawl of the stream outside, the rushing of the wind, the scattering of the rain like a legion of fleeing feet, then a sudden pause in the downpour when his

heart beat as if waiting on an unseen footstep; the very singing of the lazy kettle was a drone in this wild race of stream and wind and rain, emphasising the speed of all else. Vavasour cast a despairing glance at the mantel, oh! the endless *tick-tick*, *tick-tick*, of that round clock flanked by rows of idiotic, fat-faced, whiskered china cats, each with an immovably sardonic grin, not a whisker stirring to this merciless *tick-tick*. Aye, it was going to strike in a minute, and the clanging of it would be like the clanging of the gates of hell behind him. He did not notice Catherine, that she, too, unmindful of everything, was gazing in horror at the mantel. Vavasour groaned; oh! if the clock were only a toad or a serpent, he would put his feet on it, crush it, and—oh!—Vavasour swore madly to himself, covering his eyes. Catherine cried out, her face in her hands—the clock was striking.

Twelve!

The last clang of the bell vibrated a second and subsided; the wind whimpered softly in the chimney, the tea-kettle sang on. Through a chink in her fingers Catherine peered at Vavasour; through a similar chink there was a bright agonised eye staring at her.

"Oh!" gulped Catherine.

"The devil!" exclaimed Vavasour.

"Lad!" called his wife, putting out a hand to touch him.

Then followed a scene of joy; they embraced, they kissed, they danced about madly, and having done it once, they did it all over again and still again.

"But, Katy, are ye here, really *here?*"

"Am *I* here? Tut, lad, are *ye* here?"

"Aye, that is, are we *both* here?"

"Did ye think I wasn't goin' to be?" asked the wife, pausing.

"No-o, not that, only I thought, I thought ye was goin'—to—to faint. I thought ye looked like it," replied Vavasour, with a curious expression of suppressed, intelligent joy in his eyes.

"Oh!" exclaimed Catherine. Then, suddenly, the happiness in her face was quenched. "But, lad, I'm a wicked woman, aye, Vavasour Jones, a bad woman!"

As Vavasour had poured himself out man unto man to Eilir, so woman unto man Catherine poured herself out to her husband.

"An', lad, I went to the church-porch hopin', almost prayin' ye'd be called, that I'd see your spirit walkin'."

"Catherine, ye did that!"

"Aye, but oh! lad, I'd been so unhappy with quarrelling and hard words, I could think of nothin' else but gettin' rid of them."

"Och, 't was bad, very bad!" replied Vavasour.

"An' then, lad, when I reached the church-corner an' saw your spirit was really there, really called, an' I knew ye'd not live the year out, I was frightened, but oh! lad, I was glad, too."

Vavasour looked grave.

"Katy, it was a terrible thing to do!"

"I know it now, but I didn't at that time, dearie," answered Catherine; "I was hard-hearted, an' I was weak with longin' to escape from it all. An' then I ran home," she continued; "I was frightened, but oh! lad dear, I was glad, too, an' now it hurts me so to think it. An' when ye came in from the Lodge, ye spoke so pleasantly to me that I was troubled. An' now the year through it's grown better an' better, an' I could think of nothin' but lovin' ye an' wishin' ye to live an knowin' I was the cause of your bein' called. Och, lad, *can* ye forgive me?" asked Catherine.

"Aye," replied Vavasour slowly, "I can—none of us is without sin—but, Katy, it was wrong, aye, a terrible thing for a woman to do."

"An' then to-night, lad, I was expectin' ye to go, knowin' ye couldn't live after twelve, an' ye sittin' there so innocent an' mournful; an' when the time came I wanted to die myself. Oh!" moaned Catherine afresh.

"No matter, dearie, now," comforted Vavasour, putting his arm about her, "it *was* wrong in ye, but we're still here an' it's been a sweet year, aye, it's been better nor a honeymoon, an' all the years after we'll make better nor this. There, Katy, let's have a bit of a wassail to celebrate our All-Hallows' honeymoon, shall we?"

"Aye, lad, it would be fine," said Catherine, starting for the bowl, "but Vavasour, can ye forgive me, think, lad, for hopin', aye, an' almost prayin' to see your spirit, just wishin' that ye'd not live the year out?"

"Katy, I can, an' I'm not layin' it up against ye, though it was a wicked thing for ye to do—for any one to do. Now, dearie, fetch the wassail."

Catherine started for the bowl once more, then turned, her black eyes snapping upon him.

"Vavasour, how does it happen that the callin' is set aside an' that ye're *really* here? Such a thing's not been in Gwynen in the memory of man"; and Catherine proceeded to give a list of the All-Hallows'-Eve callings that had come inexorably true within the last hundred years.

"I'm not sayin' how it's happened, Catherine, but I'm thinkin' it's modern times an' things these days are happenin' different,—aye, modern times."

"Good!" sighed Catherine contentedly, "it's lucky 'tis modern times."

The
Heretic's
Wife

"MOTHER, Mr. Thatcher oversteps himself; any such suggestions should be comin' from the landlord." Gabriel puffed out his whiskered cheeks and grew red under his eyes.

"There, father dear, there," Maggie hastened to soothe him.

"Tut, mam, a man knows what he's talkin' about by the time he's seventy, doesn't he? A man has a right to his own thoughts; now, hasn't he? I tell ye, it was insultin', most insultin'!"

"Aye, it's so," admitted Maggie ruefully, "but, father——"

"He's always interferin' with your private affairs, he is," Gabriel interrupted, heedless of Maggie's attempts to change the conversation. "At best he's nothin' but an absentee's gentleman, now, isn't he?"

"No, I think; I'm thinkin', dad, he is himself a gentleman," Maggie contradicted gently.

"Pooh! no gentleman at all! He's the lad's tool, given the education of a gentleman, taught

to carry himself like a gentleman, an' livin' in the landlord's house in his absence ; but for all that he's not a gentleman, naught but an upper servant, an' Sir Evan treats him so. I'm thinkin' a very self-respectin' man wouldn't be takin' such a position nowadays, now, would he?"

At the sound of a horse's hoofs upon the road Gabriel turned to the window with eager curiosity, his head travelling the width of the latticed light.

"There's the young master ridin' by now!" he exclaimed.

As she contemplated the back of Gabriel's head, his pink ears protruding independently from the sides of his bald, shiny pate as if they, too, had opinions of their own, Maggie's eyes gathered anxiety. Gabriel turned to the hearth again.

"Well, mam?"

"Father, these are dangerous new ideas ye're gettin'," she answered.

"Tut, if Mr. Thatcher, steward or no steward, felt like a gentleman, then in my eyes he'd be a gentleman, indeed. But no gentleman would ever act as Mr. Thatcher does, now, isn't it?"

"Lad, lad!" Maggie remonstrated.

This advanced thinking would do for the young ones ; she would have had to confess to a liking for it in her children's letters. It was right for a new world perhaps ; but she thought

with alarm of Gabriel daring to assert such views here on the very flaggings, under the very thatch of Isgubor Newydd. She looked anxiously towards the hearth, as if she feared such social doctrine might quench its brightly glowing pot of coals, or destroy its shining fire-stools, candlesticks, pewter platters, and big copper cheese-dishes, or break its fragile, iridescent creamers and sugar basins and jugs,—there, much of it, four hundred years ago at a certain wedding-breakfast, just as it had been at her own some forty years ago. It would not have surprised her now to have it all come clattering down about her head and break in precious fragments on the stone hearth.

"Mam," said Gabriel, looking shrewdly at her troubled face, "do ye recall the repairs we asked for and never got?"

"Aye, dad dear."

"Well, mam, David Jones had his an' he asked after us. David Jones trades at Mr. Thatcher's shop, mam, an' we don't an' we're not a-goin' to," Gabriel ended pugnaciously.

"Och, father!"

"Aye, it's so, isn't it? It's insultin', isn't it, suggestin' a man change his way of prayin' to suit his landlord's steward an'—an'—" Gabriel added hesitatingly, "his landlord, I suppose, too; an' the steward obligin' him to trade at his shop to get any paint or a roof tatchèd."

The firelight shone upon Gabriel's fringe of whiskers and glowed through his pink ears and twinkled upon his bald head. He looked up indignantly to the rafters above him; they were well hung with hams and bacons upon which the dry salt glistened like frost. His expression mellowed. He glanced at the bright hearth with its bright trimmings; he looked from the purring kettle and purring kitten before Maggie's feet to Maggie herself, daintily upright on the dark settle, her cap and apron immaculately white. She was as comely and fragile as the antique china she cherished. Then Gabriel spoke contentedly, like a man who has counted his riches and found them after all more than sufficient.

"Well, mam, we've prospered even here, haven't we? It's leading a righteous life does it; aye, an' there's the young man has made us all feel like livin' better, hasn't he?"

"Aye, dear beloved," Maggie nodded, glad of the turn the conversation was taking, "even in his picture he looks like one lifted up, like the apostle Paul."

"They say, mam, that for fifteen years he prayed the same prayer to get knowledge an' do good."

"Aye, an' it came, an' now from being nought but a collier, he's influencin' thousands and thousands."

"Good reason; there's power there we know nothin' about," Gabriel said meditatively, "an', mam," he continued, "he appears like a gentleman; you might think he'd been born an' bred a gentleman."

Yes, dad, an' they say he's questionin' himself seriously," replied Maggie, leading away from the possibility of a renewed debate; "that he's puzzlin' an gettin' learnin' an' goin' to college. It's been a sweet season, father; the long winter's not been dull at all, what with meetin's every night till ten and eleven."

"Aye, it's been a blessed time, mam, an' growin' better every day. With the singin' above the housetops an' the heavenly lights, it looks like a new revelation."

"But I'm wishin' the Revival was quieter in some ways," Maggie objected; "there's people that's fairly crazed by it; yes, an' when they're gettin' the hwyl so many at once it's—it's——"

"Tut, mam," said Gabriel fiercely, "it's hot, aye; but it's a grand an' blessed stir. An' the strength it brings to men!"

As Gabriel raised his hand to enforce his belief, there was a rap on the cottage door. Maggie got up nimbly, smoothed down her apron, and hastened to the low entry.

"Aye, Mr. Thatcher, come in."

"Ah!" said Mr. Thatcher, coming in, "cosy little room, brasses attractive, pretty willow-wood there. Ah, good-afternoon, Gabriel, about to have your tea, don't let me disturb you." And Mr. Thatcher seated himself comfortably by the kitchen fire.

"We can wait for our tea, Mr. Thatcher," said Gabriel, continuing to stand.

"Ah, very well, I won't keep you long! I just came in to speak to you about that little matter I mentioned the other day. Sir Evan is much in earnest; he feels that church tenants would be a decided advantage to—to the harmony of the estate."

Maggie's glance fluttered anxiously to Gabriel.

"Mr. Thatcher, a man can't change his beliefs to suit his landlord's, meanin' no disrespect to Sir Evan," came the reply, in a voice as uncompromising as Gabriel's attitude.

"Ah-h, well," drawled Mr. Thatcher, tapping his long nose; "there's Price an' Howell an' Jenkins, they're church people *now*," he concluded.

"May every one pity them!" exclaimed Gabriel.

"Dad, dad!" called Maggie rebukingly.

"Ah!" said Mr. Thatcher. "Well, Gabriel, I came here to speak of other matters, too. You never come to my shop?"

"No, Mr. Thatcher, I don't."

Maggie was wringing her hands under her apron.

"You farmers don't know when you're well off; it would be profitable for you to trade there."

Maggie stared in dismay at the red mounting under Gabriel's eyes and flushing the edges of his bald head.

"Is that a bribe ye're offerin' me, Mr. Thatcher?" Gabriel asked.

"Ah! no impertinence, if you please," replied the steward. "As I was saying, Sir Evan is very devout now and much in earnest about having his people churched, so it will be necessary, unless you have a change of opinion, for you to leave Isgubor Newydd in two weeks."

Mr. Thatcher rapped his gaiter and looked before him into the fire.

"Father," said Maggie, poking him, her wrinkled cheeks white, her lips trembling; "father, did he say *leave* Isgubor Newydd?"

"You heard Mr. Thatcher, mam," answered Gabriel stonily.

"Of course, Gabriel," continued the steward, "there is the shop, as a favour to you, if——"

"Sir!" roared Gabriel, his hands working, his eyes blazing.

"Dad, dad dear!" cried Maggie, clinging to his arm; "father, remember."

Mr. Thatcher had risen and was stepping

towards the door. "Good-afternoon," he said, "in two weeks, if you please."

They watched the figure of the steward disappear through the doorway, then Gabriel took his seat by the fire.

"Leave Isgubor Newydd?" Maggie whispered.

"Well, mam, I'd rather go than stay," said Gabriel sharply.

"Dad!"

"Aye, it'll be sacrificin' somethin' for the faith."

"Och, you don't understand," Maggie cried; "I was born here, mother was born here—for hundreds of years we've lived in Isgubor Newydd!"

"Mam, it'll be doin' somethin' for the faith," Gabriel replied obstinately, in his voice the trumpet-sound of battle; "an' I say I'd rather go than stay, whatever."

"Och, father, father dear, how can ye? An' we were married here an' the little ones were born here, an' when they come home where'll they come to now?"

For an instant Gabriel looked bewildered, then said stoutly, "Tut, mam!"

"I can't believe the young master did it," continued Maggie, unsilenced; "lovin' the house is most like lovin' the children. Dear beloved, can't you see?"

Without even a shake of the head Gabriel stared before him.

"Dad, I have——" Maggie hesitated, "I've three pounds put by for an ill day."

"Well?"

"Dad dear," Maggie whispered, desperate courage on her lips, desperate fear in her eyes, "would ye—would ye buy me somethin'—somethin' at Mr. Thatcher's shop—or—that is just for me or—or—I'll do it, father?"

"Maggie Williams," Gabriel shouted, "do ye know what ye are sayin', or are ye the devil temptin' me?"

With the habit of a lifetime Maggie, in the end, tried to acquiesce and think only of Gabriel's point of view. She chid herself for lack of strength, for want of courage to act for her faith. She made, as the days went by, an effort to seem the same to Gabriel, but all the while it was as if something were eating out her life. As she went about the little cottage her hands followed from one object to another, for wherever her eyes fell they fell upon something dearly loved. It took her an interminable time to pack anything to leave Isgubor Newydd; it was handled and handled again, and then set aside because, after all, she could not tell what should be done with it. As a result, for the first time in many generations the cottage was in confusion.

Maggie began with the chest. The very odour from the oaken box made her ache. When, first of all, out came the little garments of the children who had scattered over the world, as a Welshman's children often must, she wept. The wee, clumsy clogs with their stubbed toes, the patched corduroy trousers, the round caps, seemed so dear, as if their little master's frolics were a thing of yesterday.

But Maggie knew that time now to be a thing of the past,—a past of which she could not keep even the hearth, the walls, the garden within which these joys had been lived. Next, she took out a beaver hat that had been her mother's ; she smoothed it gently as if it were a tired head, she put it against her cheek, she held it away from her, looking at it tenderly, then with a moan she dropped it back into the chest. That part of her life, too, seemed but yesterday, and yet it was so much older than Gabriel and the children. As long as she lived, Maggie asked herself, would these things always be young to her? As she stood there thinking, it came to her that people at least did not realise that they were growing old if they stayed in the same place, for the place was always young, its rafters staunch, its walls fresh, the flowers renewed their bloom and the grass its colour. With sudden resolve

Maggie decided that they must not leave Isgubor Newydd, for Gabriel did not know what he was doing. There were the three pounds—perhaps that might help them. She had no time to lose, she must hasten, and her thoughts ran feverishly forward into the future.

Gabriel had noticed that Maggie was growing weaker; her hands shook, she talked to herself, and often, when Gabriel came into the room, she started. Gabriel did not wish to see these things; he was like a cruel prophet exulting in sacrifice, even in the sacrifice of Maggie to the uttermost. The stress of these days but added strength to his step and power to his glance. In chapel he sang with a mighty voice, and loud and frequent were his assents to the minister's prayers. From his deacon's seat, where he received congratulation from those less blessed by persecution than himself, he could see Maggie seated limply upon the narrow pew bench, all her one-time erectness gone, her eyes wandering to the windows high above the heads of the congregation, and to the mountains, higher still, which looked down into this little chapel of men. Gabriel was like some protomartyr of ancient Wales, like Amphibalus or Albanus of Caerlon; in his zeal he was indifferent to personal discomfort and sacrifice. He exulted

in his strength with a savage joy, and because he was resisting his natural inclination to be kind to Maggie, he was roughly unkind,—unkind for the first time in their lives. On his fingers he told over and over all the sacrifices martyrs and prophets and teachers had made of their nearest and dearest. It was a glorious bead-roll, one to make the eyes of a valiant man shine. He could give nothing more precious than Maggie. He exhorted her to be strong in spirit. She listened patiently to his words, her hands unclasped in her lap, her head drooping, and a gentle "yes" breathed from time to time. She was like a tired child, good still, but too weary to know what it was all about. To Gabriel she seemed so ineffective that he wanted to take her by the shoulders and shake her, for in his eyes righteousness had gone completely out of her. She was a vessel empty of strength, and every time he spoke to her, her head drooped a little more and the poor hands lay more weakly in her lap. "Yes, father, I will try," she would say in reply to his exhortation; and then the touch of the place ached in her fingers and ran up into her heart, and her one longing was to gather it all to her breast, if only she could, and run away with it to the ends of the earth, where persecution could not take it from her again. There was

no piece of its wood or stone that was not living to her, that had not entered into her sense of motherhood, of possession, for which she did not feel, where a good woman weak or strong feels everything that is inseparable from her.

One day, four days before they must leave Isgubor Newydd, Gabriel came out of his fields, rich with the grass the benefit of which he was not to reap, and saw something creeping slowly by the hedge along the road to the village. He studied it. He rubbed his old eyes and looked again. It was Maggie's cloak and cap, and she was well up the hill to the town. But she went slowly, one hand leaning on the wall in front of the hedge, the other grasping a stick. Suddenly Gabriel started. Ah, if she had *that* in mind! He hurried forward to overtake her. As he approached, Maggie turned.

"Is that you, dad?" she said.

"Mam," was all he answered, his eyes looking her through.

"I—I was goin' to—to the town," she faltered.

"Why?"

"To—to buy somethin'," she replied unsteadily.

"At Mr. Thatcher's shop?" Gabriel demanded.

"A—a little, dad," she replied, stretching out one hand upon the wall for more support.

"Give me your purse."

Maggie gave it to him and Gabriel opened it; there within lay the three gold pieces. Gabriel took her by the arm, and, shaking her, turned her towards home.

Another day went by, and Maggie continued to pick up things that should be packed, only to put them down again. The Welsh have tender hearts for trouble, and many a kind soul among her neighbours would have been glad to assist her. Besides, there was the added incentive of persecution which makes all the Welsh world kin and which made the village proud of Isgubor Newydd. But the thought of neighbourly assistance was repulsive to Maggie. She could not let others see those things now. Under Gabriel's condemnation, too, she had lost her self-respect, and was furtive and half ashamed of meeting her neighbours. When Gabriel was in the house, she moved about from thing to thing, with a feint of accomplishing something of the work of which so much was to be done. But when he was out she hurried from object to object, talking incessantly to herself and whatever she touched.

"There, little one," she said to a creamer she took from a shelf, stuffing a piece of paper into it, "that will be grand to keep your heart from crackin' while you're away from home." Then, looking aimlessly about the room, she put the

pitcher back again upon the shelf and went over to the latticed light where stood a pot of tall fuchsias. With her finger she counted the blossoms: "Twenty blossoms an' fifty buds; that's less than this time last year. You must grow, little hearts," she said. "Ow! he'll be comin' back an' not a thing done," she continued, hastening to a pile of plates that had stood in the same place for almost a week. "My! but the lads wore the bench slidin' in an' out, an' here's a rough place; I'll call Eilio to make it smooth. Eilio!" she called, then brushed her hand uncertainly over her forehead. "He's not here," she said. "Ow! there's the candlesticks. I'd most forgotten ye, ten—a dozen bright eyes; that's a many for old Maggie,—I'm old now, yes, I am,—a dozen bright eyes for one old woman; aye, an' for Gabriel, too, the lad 'd not do without ye. In ye go!" And she took them all and threw them clattering into an empty box. "Hwi, hwi, now go to sleep while mam sings a lullabye—a sweet lullabye—a little lullabye—shoo! Here, Gwennie bach, here, darlin'—it's—it's just a bit of tea-cake mam made for ye—it's rich, most too rich for a little one an', dear little heart, it's plums in it an'—an'——" And with a moan Maggie slipped to the slate flaggings, the empty plate breaking upon the stones.

So Gabriel found her lying huddled upon the hearth, her cap awry, her eyes closed, her mouth open and her breath coming harshly. Out in the barn he had heard the call for Eilio and stopped to wonder what it meant. Then followed a great clatter, and shortly a crash as of breaking china.

"Mam," he said, gathering her head awkwardly into his arms, "mam, are ye hurt?"

There was no answer.

"Mam," he whispered, staring at her, "what is it?" Still the eyelids, puffed and blue, lay unstirred. "Och!" he cried, "mam, mam, can't ye speak?"

Tremblingly Gabriel picked her up and carried her over to the couch. He fetched water and wrung out his handkerchief in it and bathed Maggie's head. He dropped on his knees beside her and clumsily loosened her cap and blouse. He thought he had killed Maggie, and he saw now that he had done so without making even an effort to keep what might have saved her life. The sense of righteousness had gone completely out of him, and his satisfied and valiant soul was crumpled into a wretched little wad, the very thought of which sickened him. Year after year she had taken the brunt of all the trouble of their home, and there was no sorrow that had not rested its head on her bosom, and, soothed by her hand, found its peace there. Gabriel bathed her

face with the cool water; still no sign of consciousness stirred the bland look of the mouth. She had worn herself out in his service, and now at the last he had been willing, without an effort to see her point of view, to sacrifice her on the altar of his self-righteousness. He was a man; steward or no steward, he could have fought for her rights. Even if he had not won, if the landlord had proved as obdurate as the steward was corrupt, why the fight might have heartened Maggie for what must come. He not only had not fought for her, but he had been cruel to her, leaving her wholly alone at a time when she most needed support and sympathy.

"Poor little mam!" he whispered, helpless with the thought that he might be helpless to do anything for her any more.

With a sigh Maggie opened her eyes and smiled at him.

"Lad, are ye here?"

"Aye, mam."

"Did it break?"

"No, dearie," he replied, looking from the strewn floor with such reassurance for her that the deacons, if they could have seen his face, would have been confounded.

"An' the creamer I stuffed so full of paper? I thought I heard it crack."

"No, mam, not a crack."

"What'm I lyin' here for, lad? Dreamin'?"

"Aye, restin' ye a little."

"Aren't we goin' somewhere? I'm a bit tired, dad; I'd rather stay here," she concluded, looking up at him trustfully.

"We're goin' nowhere whatever, mam; an' ye shall stay here," Gabriel answered.

"Is that the children playin'?"

"Aye, dearie, playin' in the garden."

"Dear, dear!" Maggie exclaimed, "I hear their little clogs clattering like ponies. I'll just peek at the lambs."

She lifted herself up and dropped back.

"I'm tired!" she exclaimed apologetically.

"Aye, dearie," Gabriel said; then asked, "Will ye be still here a half hour while I write a bit of a letter an' take it out?"

"Yes," she said, "very still, lad; I'll just sleep awhile"; and smiling at him, she closed her eyes.

"Poor old man!" Sir Evan muttered, his austere young face angry and pained. He turned to the letter again.

"Sir," it read, "Mr. Thatcher said we must leave Isgubor Newydd in two weeks. It broke Maggie's heart. A few minutes ago I found her lying on the floor touched. It will kill her if we must go. Sir, if your honoured lady mother were living, would you have the heart to send her

away from her home? Sir, for God's sake let me hear from you. Your humble servant,

GABRIEL WILLIAMS."

The stewards of the estate had been brought up upon it for generations in an unbroken line of eldest sons from one family of the tenantry. So rigid had the family's adherence to this custom been, that sometimes their world had had a good steward, sometimes a bad, just as all the Empire had had sometimes an excellent monarch, sometimes a wicked or incompetent ruler. It was a condition of affairs Sir Evan had taken for granted, without question of the right and wrong to himself or to others. He had wasted neither liking nor affection upon Thatcher, but it had not occurred to him that he could employ some one in whom he had confidence. Now Evan saw the possibilities of the past few years, the injustices and neglect and trouble which the steward might have inflicted in the landlord's name. How could he know that repairs, for which he paid, had been carried out? How could he know that all the houses had been kept in good condition? How could he tell whether the tenants were receiving an equal amount of attention, that the fields were being improved and the stock increased? He was convinced that there had been injustice of some kind to Gabriel

and Maggie; he knew the old man well enough to know that he would have trouble with any steward not so uncompromisingly honest as himself. Evan realised now, with the letter before him, what sort of a master he had been to these people who called him "Master," and in every one of whose homes there hung a picture of himself. He did not know now, he had never known, whether they had been dealt with justly or unjustly.

As he rode on towards Isgubor Newydd his mind was full of anxieties. For the first time in the few years of his majority possessions had become a burden. The real obligation to administer, he saw, could not be given to a deputy as he had been giving it to Thatcher. And all the while he had known the steward was not the man morally or otherwise that he should be. Evan saw a new meaning in the fields and hills of his estate and a new accountability for himself —one in which he would himself be directly responsible. Already, however, it might be too late to undo some of the harm he had wrought. He asked immediately for Maggie when Gabriel opened the door.

"She's the same, sir," replied Gabriel, admitting him.

"O Gabriel, I'm so sorry," Evan said.

"Aye, sir," Gabriel replied, with some stiffness, "it's natural your wantin' church tenants."

"But did you think I would let Thatcher send you away from the home you have had so long?" asked Evan, sick with the thought that this after all was what his tenants thought he would do.

"Indeed, sir, we didn't know."

"Ah well, it's my fault," Evan answered humbly. "For what reasons were you asked to leave?"

"Och, sir, you would not like the truth."

"Aye, Gabriel, but tell it since I ask for it."

"Well, sir, first because we wouldn't be churched."

Evan's eyes winced. "And then?"

"Well, sir, because we wouldn't trade at Mr. Thatcher's shop."

"Trade at Thatcher's shop?" Evan repeated incredulously, anger and humiliation in his tone.

"Aye, sir." Then seeing the mortification upon Sir Evan's face, Gabriel added hastily: "But it's my fault Maggie's out'n her head. I was cruel to her, an' between that an' havin' to leave home it broke her heart."

"No, Gabriel, it's more my fault than yours," said Evan. "May I see her?"

"Aye, sir," assented Gabriel, taking him into the kitchen.

Maggie raised her head, a bright look of love and welcome upon her face.

"Lad, I heard ye, I thought ye'd come, an' ye've come so far."

"Och, pardon her, sir," said Gabriel, "she thinks it's Eilio. Mam, it's the master, not Eilio."

Evan rested his hand on Maggie's hot forehead. "So," he asked, "you are not well to-day?"

"Aye, tired—but it's nothin' at all, nothin' at all, whatever, except a sorrow here, dearie," and Maggie pointed to her bosom.

"A sorrow, Maggie?"

"Aye, but it's no matter at all now," she answered. "I'll put it by in the creamer with the paper, stuff it in tight like cheese in a sack." And she laughed merrily.

"That's right," he replied.

"My, ye've grown to a sweet-lookin' lad," she said, patting his hand. "Could ye—could ye keep a home for mam now? I'll give ye," she whispered, looking at Gabriel furtively, "everythin' I have—that's three pounds. But ye mustn't tell him."

Evan glanced at Gabriel, but the old man did not see him, for he was staring at the floor.

"Lad, could ye?" Maggie demanded again.

"Yes, Maggie," Evan answered, "we will keep a home for you as long as you live. You shall have Isgubor Newydd—see, I will give it to you. You shall have a deed of it."

"There," said Maggie, "of course, tell father now, an'—an' I hope he'll want to stay."

The Choice

The Choice

I

KETURAH, leaning towards the open grate of coals in the cheerful kitchen of the Reverend Samson Jones, rubbed up and down, up and down her old shin; so rhythmical was the motion that she might have been sousing or rubbing clothes, except for a polyphonic "Ow! Ow!" to set off the rubbing. Keturah knew better than to quarrel with fate. But when the latch lifted she looked up eagerly, with that instinctive hunger for sympathy upon which most of the satisfaction of joy or the pleasure of pain depends. It was Deb, the widow Morgan's servant, and Keturah groaned afresh with the joyous sense of having from all the world just the audience she would have chosen for her misery.

"Ow, ow!"

"Well, indeed, what is it?" asked Deb, subduing her voice, but unable to dim the two ripe, red cherries in her old red cheeks, or the snap in her old eyes.

"Ow, 'tis a pain—ow! a pain in me leg."

"Och, well, 't is too bad, but 'tis nothin', 'tis nothin' but the effect of old age," said Deb comfortingly, "an' old age is never comin' alone."

"Not comin' alone?"

"Nay, nay, no more nor youth comes without love, nor middle age without comfort, nor——"

"Tut," interrupted Keturah sharply, "indeed ye are makin' a mistake; the pain has nothin' to do with growin' old. The other leg is quite as old whatever, but that one is well, aye, quite well."

After an awkward silence Deb said lightly, "Is it? well, indeed!" then passed with feminine skill to another subject. "Have ye heard the news about Tudur Williams? No? Well, he went quite nasty with Cardo Parry for playin' false with poor little Sally Edwards."

"Did he so! Tudur is always fightin', his pale face looks so fierce."

"Aye, bleached. 'Tis hard rememberin' he an' the schoolmistress are brother and sister."

"Aye, hard, but what did Cardo Parry do?"

The two women lowered their voices, and with that naïve liking old age often has for repulsive tales, they rolled this particular story as a sweet morsel under their tongues. Keturah forgot to rub her old shin, and the two women

confronted each other in the candle-lighted room with bright eyes in which every skip of the flame from the coals over the shining brasses was reflected.

"Tudur Williams was right!" exclaimed Keturah.

"Aye, Tudur Williams is always right; but do you believe in it?"

"Aye, aye, I do indeed."

"Tut, Keturah, believe that? I cannot. Ye're that trustin', ye'd believe the whale swallowed Jonah, indeed."

"Aye, so I do," fervently affirmed Keturah; "that blessed story I heard from the master's father first, and I've heard it often from the master himself. 'Tis true as the Lord's Prayer."

"Pooh!" sniffed Deb, with the superiority of one indulging in the higher criticism; if the Bible said Jonah swallowed the whale ye'd believe that, too!"

"Aye, aye, indeed, iss, iss, if the Bible said so," admitted Keturah simply; "but the Bible don't."

"Well," Deb hastened to add, with a sense of having been on tottering exegetical foundations, "I dunno. But if I was to say the pastor would marry my mistress, would ye believe that, now would ye?"

Keturah considered; she had a helpless sense of tossing Jonah and the whale to and fro in an effort to understand the connection of Deb's last remark. To this sober, long-nosed old woman, the pastor's devoted servant, the mental processes of the widow's cherry-cheeked Deb were often hard to understand. Keturah thought her distinctly light-minded, but without Deb the old woman would have been lost. In the last ten years, in which the Reverend Samson Jones had been, according to more lenient Wesleyan dispensation and the power of his own eloquence, returned twice to Gelligaer, Keturah had conceived a real love for and dependence on Deb.

"Marry the widow Jenkin Morgan?" she repeated.

"Aye, the mistress."

"Are her parents ailin'?"

"Nay," admitted Deb, crestfallen.

"Then what made ye say it?"

"I dunno," replied Deb, "but I've a feelin' here"—she patted her corsage with bright assurance—"that somethin' is comin', aye, somethin' is comin', now isn't it?"

"How can I tell? I'm thinkin' it will not be the widow whatever."

"Tut, he loves her, now doesn't he?"

"Aye, he does," replied Keturah, taking again

to rubbing her shin. "Aye, so he does, an' it's like to have ruined his life. A woman's no right to hold out to stay with her parents, be they as old as Methuselah, when a man needs her to wife. Aye, he's grown old with it all, an' he the first man in Gelligaer! But I'm thinkin' he'll not marry her."

"Not marry her!" exclaimed Deb, in real alarm. "Not marry her in the end?"

"Not marry her," solemnly repeated Keturah. "Since he went to see his lady mother last he's acted brisker, aye, he's stepped firmer and swifter, an'—an'——"

"An' what?" asked Deb breathlessly.

"An' he's been to see the schoolmistress three times since Sabbath once before last."

Deb gasped, her eyes helplessly fixed on the erect Keturah. "The schoolmistress!" she exclaimed. "Tudur Williams's sister?"

"Aye, the schoolmistress."

"But she's poor."

"Aye, so she is, an' your mistress is rich, but a minister cannot stay unmarried all his life, now can he, with all the women in the parish pursuin' him. Jane Elin's a handsome, capable young woman."

"But does he love her?" persisted Deb.

"Love her? I dunno."

"Aye, does he as he does the widow?"

"Well, indeed, I dunno. Nay," admitted Keturah reflectively, "not as he loves the widow, I'm thinkin'."

In his study the Reverend Samson Jones was conscientiously at work on his sermon; the will is a good horse, and if ever a man strove to ride it well it was Samson Jones, as he ran his fingers through his hair, looking now this way and now that, tipping back in his chair and muttering disconnectedly "planet shining in the night," "morning star of a revival," "brook in the desert," "arid waste," "Dan to Beersheba," "the understanding and the conscience," "the affections and the will." The last word smote him and he pushed away the neatly written sheets of his sermon. Nothing any longer that he said or wrote seemed coherent or to have meaning. In years past when the Almighty had called on Samson Jones, Samson Jones had answered, with the result that Gelligaer had been listening to an eloquence unparalleled in the history of the village,—an eloquence that had brought men, women, and children from the outlying farms and hills into the Chapel, that had touched every nonconformist tradesman in the town, that had won the respect of the stricter Calvinists, and the friendly co-operation of the Church. But for

two weeks no eloquent word had come to his lips; his speech had been like a spring checked at its source. To-morrow was the day he had set on which to display finally the power of his will, and to-morrow would be here in twelve hours; after that he might allow a few hours, until the proper interval came in Jane Elin's school work, and then—— !

Samson Jones covered his eyes and moaned aloud, with pagan reliance upon the helpfulness of an old saying, "Gwell pwyll nog aur [prudence is better than gold]; ond tan enw pwyll y daw twyll [but under the name of prudence deceit will come]." His head felt hot and as if every thought were a string stretched to the snapping-point; and his heart beat uncomfortably. He unlocked the drawer of his writing-table and took out a picture; it was the photograph of a charming face, of a woman evidently about thirty, but whose features were round and childlike, the deep fringed lashes, the coronal of hair and contour of chin giving the countenance the circular aspect and soft depth and delicate tinting of a pansy. Before it Samson Jones, who was of the same flesh and blood as other mortals, sat, tears filling his eyes, spilling over and rolling down his face, and the hand that held the picture shaking as it had not shaken since it held its

first public sermon. Ah, he loved her so, and had loved her even before her marriage! After her husband had died unexpectedly, Samson Jones got himself recalled to Gelligaer, a feat that only he could have accomplished, and then had come this second trial.

With the unaccountable determination soft, gentle things sometimes display, Dolly Morgan had decided not to marry again so long as her old father and mother lived. She had admitted her love for Samson Jones, but assured him at the same time that he must wait. He had loved her now with the exclusive passion of a warm, dependent nature through six long years. The parents might live, however, for twenty years more. He had battled in vain against the resolution of Dolly, who, having experienced matrimony once, had no longer a maiden's eagerness to rush into matrimony again, however desirable. He had urged upon her the especial responsibility of a minister's life, the need he had for a wife to help him, the years that her parents were likely to live, the wish of his congregation that he should marry, and finally, again and again, his great love for her. But Dolly could be convinced of no immediate duty beyond that due to her parents. But there was no shadow of a doubt in her mind that the day would come in-

evitably when she would be Mrs. Samson Jones "the minister," just as she had certainly been two years ago Mrs. Jenkin Morgan "the shop." Her mind was full of untroubled *axiomata media*, and these two facts were of them, the one proved, the other unproved but not disproved.

In the meantime the pastor's work suffered; he was pursued by marriageable women young and old; he had advice from experienced matrons forced upon him; from every conceivable point of view, utilitarian to ideal, his brothers of the cloth had taken up the subject of matrimony for a young minister; and at last had come his own conviction that he had not given himself over wholly to the good of his ministry. Finally, there had been a conversation with his wise old mother. Samson Jones saw afresh that Jane Elin had made herself indispensable to him in his work. She was useful in every organisation connected with the Chapel: the societies, the sessions, the prayer-meetings, the Cymanfas; and she was a leader in the Sunday school, which young and old attended. She was always effective, always busy, and always polite. Her equilibrium could no more have been disturbed than a buoy's on the ocean, for whatever came, she was still in her element.

Jane Elin had learned her most important

lessons under that best of teachers—adversity; from this unexceptionable preceptress she had grown wise in reflection, and from teacher and teaching she had won the sharp weapon of an excellent education. Consciously or unconsciously there were two decisive factors in the minister's feeling that it was advisable to marry the schoolmistress now, since he could not have the widow. First, she worshipped him, as every one in Galligaer knew; that was as near as Jane Elin had come thus far to an insurmountable difficulty. And, secondly, Samson Jones leaned on her; for if the world is divided into those who lift and those who lean, Samson Jones had learned to lean on Jane Elin.

The will is a good horse, but the Reverend Samson Jones sat his horse with difficulty, and only by steadying himself with the thought of his mother. He took the picture of Dolly, which he felt that he no longer had any right to keep, and tore it slowly in two, then once more in two, then in two again, then he dropped his head on the table with a sob. By the morrow he would have committed himself, and even his thoughts after that must be honourable to the schoolmistress.

It is easy to sleep in a perfect skin; when a man feels as Samson Jones did, the very thought

of sleep is misery. But the cottage was quiet, Keturah had gone to her loft, and, habit being strong, he took his candle and stumbled upstairs to bed, wiping his eyes with his coat-sleeve. He took off his clothes with a sense that each garment stripped him of one more hope and joy. And as he slipped on to his knees by his bedside, there seemed nothing left for which to live. He had merely a dull sense of a nightly duty still to be performed. Before he knew what he was saying, he had repeated a childish rhyme not thought of since he was a boy. Horrified that it had come to him at such a moment, he rushed fervently into the petitions and acknowledgments of a conventional prayer. He sought to spread himself meekly before an inevitable will in this choice of a wife, then he paused a minute, groaned and ended with, "Lord, Lord, I long exceedingly for Dolly."

Little Dilys sat with her doll in front of the schoolhouse by the stream. As the happy children had tumbled out of school, the bell rang its quick strokes from the bell-cot. That it would soon ring them in again did not much matter to Dilys, for despite the fact that she loved Lul, the doll, with a love warmer than platonic, there was another she loved still better. Both had pink cheeks, but Lul's helplessness

wore on Dilys and the schoolmistress was never helpless. The child liked the proprietary feeling she had in the helpful hands and nice warm arms of her schoolmistress foster-mother. At the moment she was provoked with Lul for looking so stuffed, just as if she had eaten too much, and she shook her till her eyes clappered in her head and her Welsh beaver tumbled off her fuzzy hair. Overcome by remorse at Lul's dilapidated aspect, she called her all the endearing names she could muster : " white sugar," " sugar and honey," " hundred and a thousand." " the world's value," " white love," " the apple of her eye," and " tidy baby " which she obviously was not. But not one of these superlative terms of endearment took away the pained, stuffed expression of Lul's countenance.

The doll's history had not been a happy one. Ever since she had been born in Gelligaer, the summer before, she had presented many grave questions, that had incessantly to be referred from Dilys to the schoolmistress, from the schoolmistress to the Reverend Samson Jones, and finally to the medical man. There was the question in the first place of how she got here—Dilys always sought for the sources of truth, as her sweet name might indicate ; then, once admitting that Lul was here,—which she seemed

to be,—why did she come without being properly provided with a fashionable bonnet? Dilys found herself obliged to take a great deal on faith.

When she saw the minister entering the school close, she dropped Lul and rushed upon Samson Jones. But the minister, putting her away gently, asked for the schoolmistress. Dilys led him in, never once aware that his thoughts clappered worse than Lul's eyes had, and that he saw neither stick nor stone of the school close as he marched forward blindly to the completion of a last duty. Dilys found all grown-ups, except Jane Elin, unaccountable at seasons: sometimes they would talk too much, for example when Lul was saying her prayers or going to sleep; and sometimes, when any sensible mortal would be glad of conversation, they wouldn't talk at all.

Half an hour later, when the minister came out, Dilys, who based a reasonable faith on the substance of things hoped for, ran trustingly to him again. And this time he did talk, and looked so brisk, and inquired about Lul and gave her,—oh, wonderful new joy!—a whole shilling with which to buy a stylish bonnet for Lul.

Dilys ran skipping and jumping in to her guardian, but Jane Elin, wiping her eyes and smiling at the same time, put Dilys away with

a "Well, indeed, dear, 'tis grand, but 'tis very late now. Run tell Glyn to ring the bell." While she wiped away the last tears, Glyn did ring the bell till it danced like mad in the bell-cot and the old people thought with a smile how boys must be boys with bell-ropes. To Jane Elin it seemed, as all the little valleys and hill-tops tossed its clangour to and fro, the sweetest sound in all the world; for the joy of all joys, the great unaccountable joy, had come to her, after it had been resigned a score of times to another. Further than this thought the school-mistress allowed herself no hysterical pause. Her character, like a firm sock, had been knit a stitch at a time, and stood the strain of the last half-hour with no sign of wear and tear.

Dilys tucked Lul under her bench, Lul was so dull, and looked lovingly at the shine on Jane Elin's bright face and at her pretty bright hair. Dilys was certain there was no one in all Gelligaer or beyond its mountains like her own dear Jane Elin, and as the baton beat time for them to sing their closing song, Dilys opened her little mouth, red as a holly-berry, very wide indeed, and sang with all the lustiness of happy childhood:—

"My Cambria! thy valleys how dearly I love,
And thy mountains that darken the blue sky above."

II

Again Deb and Keturah confronted each other in the kitchen.

"Och, och, to think it!" sighed Deb.

"Well, 'tis natural, now isn't it? They were old people."

"Aye, but she's that lonely; 'tis pitiful to see her distress."

"But they died peaceful; neither one wanted other more than three hours; I'm thinkin' the old man barely set foot in heaven before the old woman was travellin' after him. If the Lord had 'a' planned that,—and perhaps He did,—He couldn't have done better, now could He? If Peter has the keys, as master says he has, he must have smiled to see those two old people hurryin' so to get in together, the old woman with that hasty step of hers a-skippin' after him."

"Aye, aye, they went together," sighed Deb, wiping away tears; "but, och! the mistress is like a distracted creature, pacin' up and down, up and down the house, wringin' her hands, her soft, pretty eyes all cried out, an' goin' every day to the grave where those poor souls lie."

"Poor souls," sniffed Keturah, "nothin' could satisfy ye, Deborah. They're lyin' side by side in the same grave on earth, an' singin' an' re-

joicin' hand-in-hand in heaven. Ye think too little an' talk too much," concluded Keturah, who thus far had done most of the talking herself.

The old woman had no patience with sentimentality about death, for she had served forty years in a minister's family, where life in its birth, its growth, its death, had come and gone about her with epical fullness. There was little human history that Keturah's old eyes had not as calmly surveyed as they looked now upon the tearful face of Deb.

"But she weeps so, poor dear, an' the only time she seemed more cheerful was when the pastor came to bury the old people. When they came back from the grave she begged him to stay awhile, but he couldn't, an' then she cried an' cried again, poor child."

"Well, well," said Keturah, with a shrewd, troubled look, "'tis a pity."

"But he loves her, now doesn't he?"

"Aye, he does whatever."

"T'was only a week ago," said Deb, patting herself on her corsage again, "I was sayin' somethin' was comin'; an' I thought then, when we were talkin' 'twould be their gettin' married, aye, I did indeed."

"Indeed, so ye did," Keturah repeated. "Tut,

there's the knocker clappin'. Now who would be comin' this late, and the master so tired?"

Keturah hobbled swiftly through the kitchen and narrow hallway to the door.

"Well, Mrs. Morgan!"

"Yes, Keturah, is your master in?"

"Aye, in his study; will ye go in there?"

To the Reverend Samson Jones, since the death of the widow Morgan's parents, life had seemed nothing more dignified than a low gambling game. He had done what he believed a man should do; after protracted delay and a final self-conquest greater than any one knew, he had done the thing duty told him to do. Had he delayed twenty-four hours longer to do this duty, that for which he had waited and longed through six years would have been his. Now, horse and rider had stumbled together, and all the principles which have been as a guide-post to his fervid spirit lay prostrate with him.

When the door opened and the widow Morgan came in, Samson Jones was sitting idly in his study-chair, nerveless and confused, one moment saying to himself that he would send for Jane Elin and tell her all, the next minute terrified at the very thought, and the third moment condemning himself for lack of courage to accept what had come upon him through no fault of

his own. The aspect of his thin, long face had become so ghastly, and the confusion of his words so unusual, that not only had Keturah and Jane Elin watched him with alarm, but the deacons and good-wives of Gelligaer began to question, to talk of the oncoming of the spring and its bad effect on the system, to suggest a holiday for their beloved pastor; and one good-wife had gone so far as to consult Keturah and to write to Mrs. Jones, his mother. His thoughts and feelings were like filings with no centrifugal force to gather them in. As he jumped to his feet with the exclamation, "Dolly!" these thoughts and feelings flocked swiftly about the love he had for her.

The widow's eyes looked red and her voice quavered as she said, "I am so lonely, Samson, och, so lonely!"

"Aye," said Samson, trying to shift his glance from her appealing face.

Dolly dropped into a chair and slipped back her scarf. Her chin trembled pitifully. "I am so lonely, Samson; I thought perhaps you had forgotten me?"

"No, I've not indeed."

"Well, and don't you love me any more? I thought you'd never forget."

"Aye, I love you but—but——"

At this Dolly rushed upon him like an impulsive, gladdened child. "Och, then, nothing else matters, nothing at all whatever!" She clung to him eagerly, and with her arms about him the last vestige of Samson Jones's resolution was quenched.

After that, through the blissful evening he knew nothing but blind snatching at ecstasy. He tried to forget everything. That night, when he saw Dolly home, she was an appeased, contented child whose only thought of the morrow is the untroubled one that it will come again and again with the same delicious happiness.

But never had Samson Jones known anything like the week that followed, with its dissimulations petty and large, its pained irresolution, its alternations between ecstasy and despair. The surface of his mild zealous eyes had come to have the feverish look of a man living in a delirium. With Jane Elin he was gallant, attentive, punctilious, a finished lover. With Dolly he gave himself up so to the luxury of their love, that the widow Morgan wondered why she had not seen before the extravagant passionateness of his nature.

For her part, Jane Elin rang again and again on the surface of this emotion called love and listened with troubled ears to the hollow sounds

within. Jane Elin had had just twenty-four hours in which to rejoice undisturbed in her new happiness. She was no idle sentimentalist, afraid to face the truth, or with rose-coloured glasses through which to look at the truth. Up to this point she had seen clearly the course of events and the ninepins fate had played with a question she believed finally settled. At last the widow was free, and Jane Elin was sober-thoughted at the new aspect that that fact put upon her relations to the minister. With both, despite the fact that Samson Jones was exceeding in devotion to each the highest expectation either could have held, intuition of something wrong about their lover made them keenly anxious.

On the Sunday after this week that Gelligaer will never forget, the minister, without a note of any kind on the desk or in his hand, preached a sermon of extraordinary power. And the old white-haired deacons sitting in a row around the pulpit nodded their heads approvingly, for it seemed to them that the good old times of fifty years ago were coming back, when all preaching in Wales was extemporaneous. Keturah alone looked with troubled face upon the minister, certain that a catastrophe was overtaking him, at the nature of which she had shrewdly guessed.

And it was the Monday following this Sunday that the Reverend Samson Jones made a convulsive resolution to see Jane Elin and tell her all. He would send for her to come to his pastoral study; it would be easier to talk with her there. His action in sending for Jane Elin was like the action of the man who instinctively puts out his hand to shield his head from a blow, for Samson Jones saw the calamity coming upon him.

He stood with down-dropped eyes as she came into the study, fingering the objects on his writing-table.

Jane Elin went up to him swiftly. "What is it, Samson? Has anything happened? Do you need me?"

"Aye, I have been meaning this last week—it seemed only right—I don't see how it is possible—I——"

"Och, tell me, Samson, tell me quickly, what is it?"

"Well, that day two weeks ago——"

"Dear, dear!" Jane Elin interjected, turning pale.

Samson Jones was thinking of an escape, any escape—this was too horrible, he could not continue with it—when his eye fell on a letter just received from his mother in answer to the one

sent by the deacon's wife, and the word "mother" flashed over his whole being like a great light revealing a path in the darkness. The joy in the freedom that came to him with this thought was almost too great for him to bear. His mother would help him.

"My mother," he stammered, "my mother, och, it is too horrible!"

"Dear anwyl!" said Jane pitifully, thinking of sickness or of death. "Is it that bad?"

"Aye," he muttered, looking around wildly, and then at his watch; "there's just time to catch the narrow-gauge to Qwyllyn. Och, good-bye!" And he was gone.

With a sense of real relief, Jane Elin stood still a moment. It was that, after all, which had been worrying him. Why had he not told her before that his mother was ill?

She walked thoughtfully toward the kitchen. "Keturah, is she very ill?"

"Who?"

"The master's mother; he told me to tell you he'd gone to catch the narrow-gauge. Is she?"

Keturah's eyes widened and contracted as she said, "Aye, very."

"Och, 'tis too bad! I must go to him."

"Nay, nay, there's no need, Miss Williams, he'll manage somehow."

"Aye, but I can nurse her; yes, I must go; I can get the next train."

"Well, ye know best," replied Keturah.

Keturah continued to sit by the fire, muttering to herself: "Well, well indeed, 'tis as I thought; dear, the poor lass, the poor lad! Trouble, trouble, trouble!" She leaned forward to stir the pot. "He'll not be wantin' it, not at all." Keturah dwelt moodily on her thoughts, with no change in attitude except when she took the oat-cake from the skillet and reached forward to stir the pot. "'Tis certain disgrace whatever; och, och, the poor lad!"

Suddenly there was the rush of hurrying feet and Deb came in breathless and excited. "Well, well, he's gone, and I didn't know that his mother——" she gasped.

"Aye, he went over an hour ago," interrupted Keturah.

"He was passin' the window, an' my mistress saw him an' called to him; but he wouldn't stay, he said he couldn't, he was runnin' to catch the train."

"Aye, so he was indeed," agreed Keturah.

"An' she ordered me to pack up an' call the coach, an' so I did; she thought she'd get there all the quicker to help him than by takin' the train an' makin' so many changes."

"Jane Elin's gone, too; she left Gelligaer over half an hour past," said Keturah slowly.

"The schoolmistress gone?" questioned Deb. "What for, indeed?"

"To be with him."

"To be with him!"

"Aye, ye're blind, blind as a bat, Deborah, an' that trustin' ye see nothin' and believe anythin'. Believin' the whale swallowed Jonah is nothin' to what ye're capable of takin' on faith," ended Keturah, with infinite sarcasm.

"Dear, dear, dear, Keturah, I cannot believe this whatever! What shall we do? Och, the disgrace it'll be!"

There was an imperative rap on the door: "Keturah, where is my sister?"

"Gone, Mr. Tudur, to be with the minister."

"She left word his mother was ill. I do not believe it. Is she?"

"Nay, to my knowledge, the old lady Jones is not ill."

"Och, the scoundrel! I thought it of him. There, you Deb, where's your mistress?"

"She's—she's gone, too," Deb answered, shaking from her ankles up.

"Gone where?"

"To Qwyllyn."

"I'll go after," he shouted, slamming the door.

Keturah sank back by the fire. "Well, indeed, well, indeed!" she said, with the peaceful accent of one who has accomplished an end, "they're all off now. Ye've no need to cry, for what will be, will be," she continued dryly to Deb, who was sobbing. "The old lady Jones will manage."

"Och, but 'tis shockin', shockin'; an' they'll never have him in Gelligaer again."

"So 'tis. Well, they're all on the road now. The master's about at Dinas; Jane Elin, if her train's on time, is at Llanengan; the widow Morgan, if her coach is makin' good speed, is about at Abersoch; and Tudur's just leavin' Gelligaer. The old lady Jones will have her hands full, but she's a wise old lady, a very wise old lady. 'Twill all get settled when she takes it up, aye, so 'twill."

A Last Discipline

A Last Discipline

"BARBARA, the flummery's sour!"

Samuel pushed back his dish and dropped his spoon.

"Aye, dad, a bit sour; I'm sorry."

"A bit sour!" exclaimed the husband, "a bit sour! tut, *more'n* a bit sour, whatever!"

Barbara looked at him, the corners of her sweet old mouth trembling, "Father, I'm sorry; I thought it was better nor usual."

"Better nor usual! Ye're full of fancies, Barbara, a-runnin' round nursin' other folks, an takin' other folks' troubles, all except your own. Yesterday ye made broth for the servant-men, an' it was every bit meat; broth like that'll ruin my pocket, an' anyhow we arn't providin' for gentlemen's families."

"Aye, father dear, but for a long while they've had nothin' but barefoot porridge, an' there was a little extra meat in the house, an' I thought——"

"An' ye thought! Ye needn't think, mother. Such thinkin' as ye do is ruinin' my prospects."

"Dad dear, I'll not do it again if ye say no."

"I did not say 'no,' I said yesterday ye gave the men an all-meat broth an' it was no holiday."

The old man's voice grew petulantly angry, the childlike appeal of his wife's eyes, the trembling lips, her gentle sweetness, irritated him.

"Very well, dear."

"Mother, they've milk on the farm, which is more'n they'd have in their own homes; if they lived at home they'd be scramblin' with their children to suck herrin'-bones. Stirabout with plenty of milk is good for any man, an' it's especially good for a workin' man; they have all the stirabout they can eat here, an' some kind of meat-broth an' tart every day."

"Very well, dear, I'll see that it doesn't happen again."

"Aye, an' mother, I found one of the tubs of butter in the dairy touched; there was most a half a pound of butter taken out. Do ye know who took it?"

"Dad, I took it for Mrs. Powell the carpenter, who's ill."

"For Mrs. Powell the carpenter! An' then how are we goin' to pay the landlord, think ye, if ye go takin' the butter to sick people?"

"She's very sick, father, an' they're very poor,

an' I thought it would be such a nice to her just now, and she did relish it so."

"Relish it! Aye, soon ye'll be distributin' the sheep to the neighbours. An', mother, I found some broken crockery in the garden out by the corner of the hedge. It looked most as if it had been hidden there; do ye know anythin' about it?"

"Aye, I know somethin' about it."

"An' what do ye know?"

"Father, that I shall not be tellin' ye, whatever."

"Not be tellin' me! not be tellin' *me?*" he exclaimed hotly. "Tut, Barbara, what's come over ye?"

"No, father, not be tellin' ye," answered Barbara, with gentle deliberateness.

"Indeed, we'll see. Maggie, Maggie," shouted Samuel, "Maggie, come here!"

Maggie came hurrying to the door, anxiety in every feature of her face.

"Maggie Morgan, what do ye——" began Samuel.

"Father, that will do," interrupted Barbara; "Maggie, ye may go."

The girl turned and went; speechless, Samuel regarded his wife.

"Father," she continued gently, "I broke it

an' I hid it. I was—mixin' oat-cake in the bowl an' the bowl was on my knee, an' suddenly it slipped an' fell on to the flaggin's an' broke. Then I hid it 'cause,"—the quiet voice faltered, —" 'cause—why 'cause, of course, father, I thought ye'd be troubled over it if ye saw it, an' ye'd not miss it if ye didn't."

" Alack, mother ! " There was genuine astonishment in the husband's exclamation. " Barbara ! to think we'd be livin' together forty-five years an' ye deceivin' me at the last like this. I've just one thing the more to say to ye. There's no cause for makin' a duck-pond out'n the kitchen floor an' if——"

" But, father," interrupted Barbara, wiping her eyes with her apron, " father *dear*, the lads was just foolin' a little an' they spilt a bit of water on the flaggin's, an' before Maggie could mop it up ye came in."

" Tell them an' such as them to go live with the pigs ! " And Samuel, pushing back his chair, rose hastily to his feet, and left the room.

" Father, father *dear !* " called Barbara.

There was no answer, and she was alone.

" Oh, father, if ye but loved me as ye used to ! There were never any words then. Oh, lad, lad ! "

There was no reproach, no bitterness in her

voice, only longing ; she loved him so, and their time at best was short, and she couldn't manage to please him in anything. And perhaps this was their one chance—a few years at best, perhaps a few weeks, and it might be only days. She cried patiently as if she had lost something irrecoverable, an ideal, a hope, a child. Their past, the past of their youth, lay before her now, in its human romance and young love, like something perished ; and, wistful, she dwelt in its memories, on its common human beauty. Suddenly she ceased crying.

"Aye, but I lied to him an' I never did before, indeed. I was afraid Maggie'd lose her place if he knew she broke it ; an' to think that I hid the pieces from him ! Oh, Sammie, Sammie ! I'm deservin' what's come to-day, deservin' it," she concluded with satisfaction, "for sinnin' so against conscience."

She sat up straight in her chair as if to receive punishment.

"An' I'm more blessed than most. Samuel's a good man an' well respected—no man better respected. He's honest in his dealin's, he's more generous than some to his men. There was Eilir's little lad he paid the doctor's bill for, an' Morgan's old mother he buried an'——" Barbara was sitting very straight in her chair

now, with one wrinkled hand spread before her, telling off on its fingers Samuel's good deeds; her eyes shone joyously, there were so many, and in their numbering she forgot a sore heart, a cap askew, a kerchief wet over the bosom, and a wrinkled apron. "An' there was old Silvan he'd partly fed an' clothed these ten years, an' an old crot no one would do anything for, an' Sammie helped her, too. An' there was the dress he brought me from the fair, an' the gold-rimmed spectacles from Liverpool, an' the beautiful linen for caps, better nor any one else in the valley has. An' he's done everythin' for the children, an' one of them's fine a scholar as any in Wales, which is sayin' much. Aye, he's a good man, an' I'm a wicked woman to be dreamin' so; but oh, lad, lad *dear*," she ended lamely, "if ye'd only love me as ye used to!"

Samuel went out on to the farm with irritable thoughts, indignant against extravagances which he laid to Barbara, and which meant a slender purse even in their old age. He was willing to admit that she was a good woman, aye, a more than ordinarily good woman, but where she fell short, he thought, was in managing. Yes, he had prospered a little; for an instant he had an uncomfortable sense of owing this prosperity

in part to the efforts of some one besides himself. But there was this constant leakage, and again his mind flamed up over the broth and the broken pottery. It was the woman's business to see to it that no ha'penny was wasted ; he failed to recall a certain rusted spade, some moulded straps, and a snapped fill in the year's calendar. And then, at last, manlike, in the midst of the work out on the farm, he not only washed his lungs with the keen mountain air, but he washed his mind of the whole difficulty, straightway forgetting it.

When once more he entered the house for his tea, he found Barbara in the kitchen knitting before the fire—knitting socks for him. There was no trace of what had passed, no trace of her care, her grief. Her cap was fresh and tied with new ribbons, her kerchief was folded neatly over her shoulders, her apron clear white and starched, and out from beneath the short skirt peeped two brass-toed shoes bright-eyed as mice. Samuel did not know how quaint and sweet she looked. But then, why should he ? she had been always just so. He took her, all of her, for granted,—the bit of red in her old cheeks, red that matched the bright cap-ribbons ; the soft white hair, the tender eyes, the kind tired mouth, the little figure dainty as the sweet alyssum in

their garden—in short, there was nothing to be remarked upon; he simply took her for granted as he had done always, or as, for example, one takes the fresh air till one is in prison, or the sky till one goes blind, or love till it is gone.

The tea and bread and butter were on the table. Barbara poured out his cup, put in the sugar, the top of the cream, and passed the cup to him as he sat toasting his feet before the fire. Then she handed him the bread.

"Well, father," she said, patting him on the shoulder, "did ye have a successful afternoon?"

"Aye, Barbara," he answered, "fine."

Without touching the tea, she took up her knitting.

"Are the lambs comin', dear?"

"Aye, mother, they're most as big as yearlin's now. Are ye not goin' to take tea?"

"No, I've a bit distress, no more'n I have often."

"Have ye tried the peppermint?"

"Aye, but it's no good. Did Eilir say what the shearin' 'd be?"

"He did; it'll be heavier nor usual. It'll make a big shipment this year."

"Good, father, we'll be takin' a trip to the lad's college yet, what with the lambs comin' fine, the wool heavy, the calves double the

number they were last year. Father, do ye think the boy'd be ashamed of his old mam?"

"Ashamed? He's no lad of mine if he is. Well, mother, if it's all really comin' as well as it seems to be, we'll be takin' that trip to see the boy."

"Oh, father dear, 'twould be grand, what I've dreamed of these many, many years!" Barbara dropped her knitting and clasped her hands in childlike abandonment of pleasure.

"Tut, mam," added Samuel, his face lengthening, "it's not absolutely certain, what with waste in the kitchen, the breakin' of crockery, an' the men eatin' themselves out'n house an' home, it's no tellin'. It might be an extravagance, but we'll see."

"But, father!" exclaimed Barbara impulsively, and stopped.

"Well, mam, maybe it'll be; maybe we'll see the boy an' see him a great man in his college, aye, a most successful man, as good's the best."

"Oh, dearie, to think we'll be seein' him—perhaps. But, dad, do ye think he'll forget he's my boy?"

"Why should he? Mother, if we're goin' it'll be in six weeks."

"Aye, but father,"—Barbara paused, her head

reflectively to one side,—"there's the shoes. I'll have to be havin' shoes; these clogs'll not do for the lad's college."

"No matter, mother," replied Samuel, thrusting his hands into his pockets with boyish energy, "we'll have proper shoes for ye an' we'll go first to Liverpool for a travellin' suit for ye an' a proper bonnet for me an'——"

"Listen to what ye are sayin'—a bonnet for *ye!*" And Barbara laughed merrily.

"Dear me!" laughed Samuel, slapping his knee, "I mean a proper bonnet for *ye* an' for *me* a proper suit of clothes. Aye, we'll afford it all if the lambs keep comin'."

"Dearie, it'll be most too much happiness, the boy, the trip, an all the clothes. I'll be takin' him some socks an'——" Barbara gasped and touched her side with her hand.

"What ails ye, mother?"

"It's just a stitch in my side." Samuel did not notice that Barbara had turned white up to the very edges of her cap. "An' what'll ye be takin' him, dearie?"

"Dear, dear, I'll bring him a—a—well, mother, what'll I take him? He's such a great man 'twouldn't do to fetch him a cheese or eggs or a fowl, now would it?"

"That's so, father," replied Barbara reflectively.

"Aye, he's a great man an' 'twouldn't do, whatever. I have it, dad, we'll be buyin' him books in Liverpool."

"Good, so we will, mam, as many books as we can afford." And Samuel thrust his hands still further into his pockets, pursed out his lips, spread his legs apart, and contemplated the fire earnestly. "Aye, mother, books is the very thing; the lad'll be more'n pleased to have them an' to think I thought of them."

"Aye, that's so, dearie."

"Well, I'll be goin' now; we'll have to be makin' haste to have all done in six weeks, an' we'll go, mother, we'll go if we can afford it."

Samuel strode out of the room; he was over seventy, but he walked with youthful elation; indeed, in some marked fashion, despite white hair, wrinkled skin, and limbs that were beginning to bend with years, he was still a boy.

Barbara looked after him, sighing wistfully as he left the room. "It seems a bit like bein' young once more, a bit like old times." She caught her side again. "This stitch is worse than common. Aye, dearie, I was unjust to ye the mornin', an' I'm a bad old woman."

When Samuel came in for supper, he found Barbara lying down. Nothing was the matter, she assured him, "just a stitch worse than

common, aye, an' they'd be goin' to Liverpool the same." But as the night wore on it grew worse still, and by morning she was a very sick woman, suffering what even his man's eyes could see was intense pain. The old cheeks had shrunk in the night, the face blanched to an ashen gray; only the eyes remained unchanged and shone sweetly and serenely upon him.

The physician was sent for, and while one of the men was fetching him, Samuel told Barbara at least fifty times that she would "be better the morrow," and each time Barbara, too weak for speech, nodded as much as to say that she certainly would be. When the doctor came he saw her extremity and sent Samuel and Maggie from the room. A quick examination followed.

"Samuel," said the doctor, stepping into the kitchen, "Barbara is a very sick woman."

"Aye, sir, but she'll be better the morrow."

"No, Samuel, not to-morrow."

"Not to-morrow, sir? Then next day?"

"No, man, nor the next day."

"But, sir, Barbara's never ill."

"She can never get well here."

"Not the week, sir?"

"Samuel, ye do not understand. *Barbara will never be well here.*"

"Och!"

"She's dying, man; there's nothing to do for her that could be done out of Liverpool."

"Liverpool," said Samuel.

His thoughts seemed to be somewhere in the back of his mind, inaccessible, walled up from contact with the reality of what he heard and saw. He appeared unable to grasp what had happened, what was coming. Surely he was walking in a dream, and every minute there was the chance, so he thought, that he might awake from it. What was this that had come upon him in a night? Certainly not the reality, for with that he had been living for years—that was life. Barbara was dying; the words rang oddly in his ears without reaching his mind. Some stranger was speaking with him; he did not understand. Barbara was dying; no, not Barbara, somebody else; other people *did* die. Barbara, was dying; not his Barbara, not the mother of his children, the wife of his fireside, his companion during a lifetime. Somebody *was* dying; no, not his Barbara but somebody else; just give him time to think. Barbara was dying—could it be his Barbara?

"Dyin'?" asked Samuel aloud, "*Barbara* dyin'?" He repeated the words as if questioning and testing them.

"Aye, man," replied the doctor sharply, "she's dying; she's caught herself lifting something. With an operation there might be some chance; but there's none here in this place, only in Liverpool."

"Aye, Liverpool," answered Samuel, "we're goin' to Liverpool soon."

The doctor glanced at him keenly; before this he had seen childishness with some shock of grief take a sudden, unrelinquishing hold on old age.

"Well," continued Samuel, still as if talking to himself or to some one outside the room, "we'll go now; aye, we'll take the chance."

"But, man," replied the doctor, "it'll cost more money than ye spend in two years."

"No matter, sir, we'll sell the sheep, if need be. Aye, dearie," he added gently, "we'll take the chance."

"There's no time to spare, then," said the doctor looking at his watch.

"Aye," replied Samuel, "we'll be ready."

"Then be sharp about it," said the doctor, alert for the one chance of life.

"Aye, sir"; and Samuel went into the room where Barbara lay.

He looked down upon her lying in bed; he could see that her strength was slipping,

slipping away. He dropped on his knees beside her. He patted her hand, he smoothed her forehead.

"Mother!" he called.

Her eyes smiled confidingly, reassuringly up at him.

"Och, mother, I never thought of this!"

There came a feeble answering pat from her hand.

"Mother, we're goin' to Liverpool; aye, dear, they're goin' to make ye well."

Barbara moaned, and her eyes brimmed with tears.

"Father *dear*," she whispered, "let me—oh! Sammie—let me die—here."

"Tut, mam, ye're not goin' to die—aye, they'll be makin' ye well in Liverpool."

"Dad *dear*," she plead, "let me—die—here."

"But, mam," argued Samuel, "the lad'll be there waitin' for us—an'—an' to see ye," he ended weakly.

"Sammie, Sammie," she begged, "let me die here—not—away—from—home; the lad—will—understand."

"Barbara, there's a chance for ye to get well; will ye not take it for me, dearie—aye, will ye not do it for me, Barbara, for my sake?"

The big eyes that had looked into his without

anger, without selfishness, through all the circumstances of life, smiled now with sudden sweetness. The hand lying in his hand tightened, her lips trembled.

"Aye, Sammie, lad, I will."

"Dearie, Barbara, my Barbara!" he exclaimed, struggling to control himself. "Oh, mam, I do love ye so, an' I've not been good to ye!"

"Sammie, not been good to me? but ye have been, lad, an' I'm a bad old woman an' before I leave the house——"

"Mam *dear*, ye're not to say such things. I've found fault with ye an' neglected ye, but ye do know I love ye?"

"Aye, lad *dear*, I know—ye—love me but I'm a bad—old—woman, an' I must tell ye before—I—leave the house——"

"Tut, mother, mother, ye're not to say such things. I'll do for ye now, oh! I will. Mam, I'd never thought of this."

"But lad," she persisted, "I'm a bad old woman an'——"

"Tut, dearie, no, no," he silenced her. "We've just a little while an' I must see about some things. I'll call Maggie an' she'll have ye all ready, dear."

Preparations were soon made, and when

Maggie had her mistress wrapped up for the journey, Samuel and the doctor hastened into the room. It was evident that Barbara's strength was ebbing more and more rapidly away.

After she was lying on the stretcher she reached out a hand to Maggie. "Goodbye, my dear," she faltered; "be—a—good—girl."

"Och, mistress, please let me tell——"

"No, Maggie, no, not—a—word," she answered. Then suddenly Barbara cried out, "Sammie!" the first terror of death in her voice.

"There, there, mam *dear;* aye, dearie, I'm here."

"Oh, Sammie, to die—away—from home, —aye, once—over—the threshold," she murmured.

For an instant her eyes tried to smile into his, then consciousness slipped away, and a wing swept over them,—they fluttered and they closed. The doctor's stern "No matter, she will recover in the air," checked the sobs of Maggie; and so they bore her, still and white, over the threshold of her home, past the farm-servants, to the carriage.

Fields, hills, buildings flashed by, seeming with their shadows and forms to flick the windows of the railway coach. The doctor and Samuel sat side by side, and opposite on the long

seat lay Barbara, quiet and semi-conscious. The half-day's journey to Liverpool stretched out interminably, even now the most of it had been covered. Samuel was thinking, thinking, thinking, as he had never thought before, and the discipline of these thoughts was biting into him like acid. There were lines graven on his face which years alone could never write there. Aye, to learn a lesson like this in a few hours which should be learned through a lifetime,—to learn it thus in one last brief discipline! Oh, Barbara, Barbara, what had he done for her, what had he been to her? And now *if*—the thought strangled him—where, where was she going?

Then came to him the years when he might not be able to tell her any more how he regretted the selfishness of weeks and months, aye, of half a century. Even now the separation had begun; she was too weak to listen to him, he could not tell her, and in a few hours the one chance might be gone. Already, as she lay there hovering between life and death, she was no longer his in the old substantial way, but merely a hostage, fragile, ethereal, of a past life. If he had loved her every hour of those days that seemed so lastingly secure, if he had tried in every way—all the little ways—to show her how tenderly, how deeply he really loved her, the years would have

been too short. And to-day, at the best, there was the one chance growing less certain every minute ; there were but a few years at the most when he might try to make her know what she was to him.

Then, with a revulsion of feeling, the little commonplace joys dear to them both crowded in upon him ; he felt benumbed in their midst, helplessly conscious that the heart of them all was slipping, slipping away. The road of their life flowed swiftly behind him, receding ribbon-like, as the hills and trees and fields passed the coach-window, into indistinguishable distance. Their tea-time with its happy quiet, their greeting at night, their rest side by side, their goodbye in the morning, Barbara's caps, Barbara's knitting, the shining eyes, the smile—each daily commonplace thing a part of his very being. He had a sickening sense of having the roots of existence torn out.

With a pang came the thought of that other trip to Liverpool they had planned to take. What would the boy say now? And he must know how that mother-life had been wasted, neglected. And the books they were going to bring the lad, and the socks Barbara had made, and the shoes that were to delight her, and the new clothes for both, and the bonnet over which

they had laughed so merrily—the agony of these simple things, remembered, ate at his thoughts like fire. They were so little; he had never known before what they meant, or he had forgotten; now, surely, they could not be taken from him. Samuel's mind prostrated itself in petition to that Inexorable in whose power lay these little joys, his, his only, of account only to him, sacred to him only, that he might be allowed to keep them.

His face was gray with the battle of these hours when the doctor spoke, telling him that they were almost in Liverpool and must move quickly. Their voices aroused Barbara; her eyes sought Sammie's and smiled faithfully into them.

"Dearie!" he said, leaning forward with such an expression that Barbara, if she saw it clearly, could never doubt his love again.

"Lad!" she whispered in reply.

But Samuel's eyes shrank when he saw the ambulance at the station, waiting. The doctor was going in it with Barbara. Oh! this cut, cut, as that knife would cut Barbara. Already they were being separated. They were taking her out of the train, away from him, and he was looking around the great station blindly, when he felt a strong grip on his arm and heard the word, "Father!" Nothing else seemed clear

after that, and the way, the long way, rumbling through those streets, was like a narrow lane in the night. Barbara was in the streets, alone, without him, or she was already at that place where lay the one chance for him.

"There, father," the lad was comforting him, "there's no better place for her; you did just right."

Samuel sobbed convulsively, tears rolling out of his eyes unnoticed, his hands clenching the chair.

"Father, father, don't; we shall know soon."

But the old face over which he leaned paid no heed to what was said; nor did Samuel hear the quick entrance into the room and the whispered words.

"Father, do you hear? Mother's safe."

Then Samuel rose to his feet, started forward, and swayed uncertainly. The lad took his arm.

"Father," he said, "mother's very weak, and we must be careful; we can see her only a minute, that is all, the doctor says."

When they entered, Barbara lay on the bed, smiling. The nurse stepped outside; ah! she had seen so many, many moments like this, and yet her heart ached for the old man coming through the door, coming through to take into his arms the few precious years that were left.

"Mother!" he said simply.

"Sammie *dear!*" she answered, her heart shining in her eyes.

Then she espied the lad standing behind his father.

Samuel watched their greeting, his lips twitching. "Lad, lad," he cried, unable to withhold the words, "I've not been good to mam."

A flush overspread Barbara's face.

"Tut, Sammie *dear*, ye never——" she commenced indignantly.

"Be still, mother, I'm goin' to say it now; ye know I've not been good to ye. Lad," he continued, turning to him, "when ye marry, as ye will, don't think any way is too little to show her that ye love her."

"Tut, tut, Sammie *dear*," insisted Barbara, "ye *are* good to me, an' I lied to ye an'——"

"It's time to leave," said the nurse, coming in.

"But I'm going to have one word more," Barbara replied, the life springing into her eyes with this gentle defiance. "Sammie, Sammie *dear*," she called as the two men were urged through the door, "I lied about the bowl—I didn't break it but I did hide it. Maggie broke it, an' I was afraid she'd lose her place, so I hid it. Father, did ye *hear?*"

"There!" said the nurse, shutting the door.

Respice
Finem

Respice Finem

"GOOD-MORNIN', Mrs. Rhys," said Megan Griffiths, as she stooped to save her high beaver.

"'Tis kind of ye to come," answered Nance.

"How is Mr. Rhys?"

"Och, he's no——" Nance began, but she was hindered by a merry voice singing in the next room.

"Dear, dear, I can't hear ye. Did ye say he is the same?"

"Aye, he's no better."

"Is that him singin'?"

"Aye," admitted Nance.

"He's not got any cause to sing, I'm thinkin'. 'Tis a pity," she continued significantly, "ye couldn't attend Harry James's funeral. 'Twas grand. They had beautiful black candles with Scripture words written on them."

Chuckles and a protesting bark followed this observation. Megan stiffened.

"Such a funeral, Mrs. Rhys," she snapped, "is an *honour* to Rhyd Ddu! An' such loaves as

she handed over the bier to that hungry Betsan! An' the biggest cheese in the parish, with a whole guinea stuck in it! At every crossin' they rung the bell, an' we knelt down to pray in all that drenchin' wet."

"'Tis seldom Rhyd Ddu sees black candles with Scripture words on them," assented Nance.

"Pooh! the candles, *they* was nothin' to the cards Mrs. James had had printed for him—nothin'. Here's mine. They have his last words."

Nance looked eagerly towards the card.

"Scripture words, too," added Megan. "'Tis sanctifyin' how many people in Rhyd Ddu die repeatin' such words."

"What was they, Mrs. Griffiths?" asked Nance, her eagerness turning into trembling.

Megan opened the large card with its wide border of black and inner borders of silver and black, and read the words. The verses were long, and during their reading no sound came from the adjoining room. Then, aloud, Megan counted off on her fingers neighbours who had left life in this approved fashion, while the excitement in Nance's eyes was deepening and her cheeks were quivering.

"Show it me," she said.

"Indeed, 'tis a safe way to——" Megan com-

menced speaking, but commands and a sudden breaking forth of song interrupted her.

"'Tis the dog takin' him his slippers," Nance apologised.

"Yes, a safe way to die," concluded Megan testily.

In the midst of a blithe refrain of "Smile again, lovely Jane," she rose to go, muttering as she repocketed the card.

In Rhyd Ddu the rush of the modern world had not cut up the time of the folk into a fringe of unsatisfying days. With these Welsh mountain people from sunrise to sunset was a good solid day, full of solid joys and comforts or equally solid woes and sorrows. In Rhyd Ddu a man might know the complete tragic or joyous meaning of twenty-four hours, with solemn passages from starlight to dawn and manifold song from sunrise to dusk. There was no illusion in such a day, so that when he came to the Edge of the Great Confine, sharper than the ridge of his own thatched roof, that, too, seemed merely a part of the general illusion. Rather, he knew that step from the green and gold room of his outdoor world, with its inclosed hearth of daily pleasures, was a step into another room not known to him at all. But he said to himself, especially when he had spent his days among the

hills and amid mountain winds and valleys, that he could not get beyond the love in the room he knew well; so trusting what he could not see, he stepped forward quietly. And the deep waters of an infinite space closed over his head. One soul after another came to the Great Edge. There were no outcries, no lamentations over lost days, no shattering questions, no wail to trouble the ears of those who made grave signs of farewell. But there was a pang, part of the pang of birth and of love, and taken as the workman takes the ache in his crushed finger—silently. So simple were they that the coming and going of the mown grass was as an allegory of their own days, and the circumstance of death was as natural to them as the reaping of their abundant valley fruit, or the dropping of a leaf from a tree.

In Rhyd Ddu, however, the acceptance of death differed from life in one respect, for the simple pride of life was as nothing compared with the pride centring about some incident of death. They honoured dying with the frank, unhushed voice with which they praised a beautiful song or the narration of some stirring tale. They discussed it freely at a knitting-night or a merry-making; even at the "bidding" of a bride the subject was acceptable discourse. The

ways of their living taught them no evasion of this last moment.

To Nance the little old man in the next room, with his arched eyebrows, delicate features, and whimsical sprightly look, had been more than life itself, and more completely than she had words to express, her hero. The one object through the years of living that seemed worth remembering at all—those with Silvan—had been to Nance the glorification of this husband about whom the Rhyd Ddu folk were by no manner of means in concord, for pranks of speech and hand are disconcerting to the slow-moving wits of the average human being. Now, in the end, Nance foresaw wrested away from Silvan the last of the distinctions she had hoped to win for him. When she entered the room revolving these ambitions, beautiful only because love was their source, he was shaking his finger at Pedr and taking advantage of his good humour.

"Och, mam, this poor dog has had nothin' to eat. Ye're pinchin' him, whatever."

"Pinchin' him!" exclaimed Nance. "Tut, he'll not be gettin' in an' out'n the door much longer, an' I see the neighbours a-laughin' now when they look at him. He'll die with over-feedin', he will."

"He will," mocked Silvan, "die of over-feedin', he will!"

"Lad, Mrs. Griffiths's been here."

"Well, dearie, do ye think I didn't know Megan Griffiths was here? She'd crack the gates of heaven with that voice. Was she tellin' ye everythin' that didn't happen, now was she?"

"Dad, what will ye say such things about Megan for? She was tellin' of Harry James's funeral."

"Nance, she's a bell for every tooth, an' they jingle, jingle, jingle, jingle."

Nance's eyes filled.

"Och, mam, I'm just teasin' ye; an' ye were thinkin' of me the while, now weren't ye?"

"Aye, father. 'Twas a grand funeral, an' he died with them wonderful verses on his lips."

"Did he so!" exclaimed Silvan. "Well, the man had need to, drinkin' as he did."

"But, lad, there's been others, too."

"Aye, dearie, I heard Megan shoutin' them for my entertainment. I'm not deaf. But, mam," he continued, the merriment leaving his eyes, "ye're ambitious for me? Aye?"

"Aye, lad, I am," she whispered, looking away from Silvan, "I am, lad, for ye have been so long the cleverest man in Rhyd Ddu, an' the handsomest an' the kindest, an' nothin's too fine for ye. There's no woman ever had a better man nor I have, lad."

"These girls——"

Nance put up her hand.

"Lad, lad, I cannot stand it, I cannot."

"Och, dearie, I'm just teasin' ye; come here."

She went over to him and sat beside him, her head turned away from the bright eyes.

"Father, have ye thought of what's comin', have ye?"

"Nance, I'm thinkin' of it all the while, but I'm not afraid, only for ye. Dearie, ye're not to believe everythin' ye hear; Megan has a good memory, an' it takes a good memory to tell lies. 'Tisn't everybody dies repeatin' Bible verses."

"Aye, but father, Harry James *did* say those words on the card, an' all the time he never was a good man, swearin' an' drinkin' so, an' ye've been *so* good, dad, for all your teasin' an' fun."

"Tut, mam, ye're just wantin' to spoil me, a-makin' out I'm the best man in Rhyd Ddu. An' ye're wantin' me to have more honour among the neighbours nor any one else when I'm gone, now isn't that it?"

"Aye," she whispered.

"An' ye're wishin' me to promise to say some text? Would it comfort ye, mam?"

"Aye," she answered.

"What text?"

Nance thought and repeated some verses.

"No, I can't," he said, shaking his head, "I can't. They're sad, an' I've always been merry-like."

In the silence that followed these words Silvan turned to Nance.

"I might, if 'twould please ye, say *these* words." Silvan repeated a verse. "But I cannot promise even these."

As she listened Nance's face fell.

"Aye, well, dad darlin'," she said, as bravely as she could, "they're good words indeed, over-cheerful, I'm thinkin', but Holy Writ, aye, Holy Writ."

Whatever happened in the luxuriant green of the Rhyd Ddu valley, which the bees still preferred to Paradise, and the flowers to the Garden of Eden itself,—whatever happened in this valley —some phenomenal spring season, the flood that swept away their plots of mid-summer marigolds, the little life that suddenly began to make its needs felt, or the life with its last need answered —was adjudged with the most primitive wisdom and philosophy.

Megan Griffiths lost no time in distributing the gleanings from her visit with Nance, information which was often redistributed and to

which new interest accrued daily as the end of Silvan Rhys's life drew near.

"Tut," said Megan, "she's that ambitious for him, it fairly eats her up. 'Twas always so from the day of their biddin', an' here 'tis comin' his funeral, an' he'll never end with a word of Holy Writ on *his* lips, that he won't."

"There, there!" Dolly Owen objected, compassionately, her motherly face full of rebuke.

"Aye, he won't, *that* he won't," affirmed Morto Roberts, wagging his head, and sniffing the pleasant odours from the browning light-cakes.

Dolly made no reply, but turned a cake with a dexterous flip, and pulled forward the teapot to fill it with hot water. The quiet glow from the fire mirrored itself equally in her kind eyes and in the shining brass pots and kettles of the flanking shelves, and was multiplied in a thousand twinkles on the glistening salt of the flitches hanging above her head. The table was already spread with a gaily-patterned cloth, and set with china bright as the potted fuchsias and primroses blooming in the sunshine of her windows. There was nothing garish about this humble dwelling of Dolly's, yet everywhere it seemed as if sunshine had been caught and were in process. Warmth, odour, gleam, colour, and

the soft heavy wind travelling by outside, made this the workroom of a golden alchemy. Dolly smiled with benevolence as she piled up the light-cakes.

"The fat's snappish to-day; it sputtered more nor usual," she said to Megan, who was seated in the shadow of the high settle.

"Aye," responded Megan, in an irritable voice. "When I went by the house this mornin'," she persisted, "I heard him singin' some gay thing, a catch—singin' in bed, indeed, an' dyin'."

"Singin' in bed," puffed Morto, "singin' in bed whatever, an' dyin'. Up to the last a-caperin' an' a-dancin' like a fox in the moonlight."

"There, there!" Dolly objected again, filling Morto's plate with cakes; "he's been a kind man, a very kind man. There was Tom *bach* he put to school an' clothed would follow him about like a puppy, an' so would Nance, an' so would his own dog."

"Pooh! what's that?" asked Megan. "Mrs. Rhys has had the managin' of most everythin', I'm thinkin', an' his houses he's been praised for keepin' in such fine repair, an' the old pastor's stipend—aye, well, ask Nance," ended Megan, with a shrug of her shoulder, and a gulp of hot tea.

"Aye, well, ask Mrs. Rhys," echoed Morto,

"an' ye mind it was the same pastor's coat-tails he hung the dog-tongs to when he was some thirty years younger, an' by twenty too old for any such capers. He's an infiddle, he is, a-doin' such things."

"An' 'twas he, wasn't it," Megan added, "who put that slimy newt in Sian Howell's hat?"

"Aye, so 'twas, an' she had a way of clappin' her beaver on quick, an' down came that newt a-hoppin' on her white cap."

"An' he tied the two Janes's cap-strings together, the one who always prayed sittin' straight up, an' the other in the pew behind leanin' forward, didn't he?" demanded Megan. "They went quite nasty with him for that."

"Well," said Dolly, cutting a generous slice of pound cake for Megan, "I'm thinkin' it's not just, talkin' so; the lad was full of life. He could no more keep his feet on earth than the cricket in the field. 'Tis come he's old an' dyin', an' I can see no harm in his havin' had a little fun, an' singin' now an' then."

"Tut, now an' then!" exclaimed Megan. "'Tis over foolish he is, now isn't he?"

"Aye," agreed Morto, "he's light."

"He'd have gone quite on the downfall years ago, hadn't it been for Nance."

"Quite on the downfall," echoed Morto.

"Aye, an' there'll be no word of Scripture crossin' *his* lips," concluded Megan.

Morto had his private reasons for losing no love upon Silvan, and Megan hers of a similar nature. Even the kindest villagers had taken to considering the words Silvan would or would not speak at the last. Rumour, peering into corners with antiquarian diligence and nodding his white head in prophecy, sat down by every fireside as much at home as the cottage cat or the fat bundle of babyhood that rolled upon the hearth. Wherever Rumour seated himself, "he will" and "he won't" was tossed about excitedly under thatched roofs. The very shepherd on the hills cast a speculative glance upon Nance's cottage, and Mr. Shoni "the *coach*" added another question to his daily *questionnaire*.

There was no begging the fact that precedent had begun to weigh heavily on the last moments of speech of the Rhyd Ddu inhabitants. A man of years thought anxiously, like one skating on thin ice, how far out he dare venture without some talismanic and now established words. There were neighbours in Rhyd Ddu, however, probably no more accomplished with their tongues than motherly Dolly Owen, who, speculated but little and whose hearts went out to

Nance and Silvan. Although they had never seen the Silvan Nance saw, nevertheless they considered him a good neighbour, and the path to Nance's cottage was much travelled by kindly thoughts and by helpful feet.

While the news, old Rumour panting in the rear, was running swiftly from door to door, Nance was watching Silvan with passionate devotion, no expression of the face that had lain close to her own for so many years escaping her. Rhyd Ddu must know at the last, must have some solemn sign of the eminent goodness he had meant to her. She could not let him go with one of his jests on his lips—every day was fit enough for that, but not these minutes. Her thoughts clung even to the words of the over-cheerful verse she believed he would say. And yet there was a tantalising merriness in his eyes.

"Father," she said, "do ye mind?"

"Aye, dearie, I'm to be sayin' that ye—have the faith an' I—I have the works?"

"Och, lad!"

"There, mam, I'm just teasin' ye—just teasin' ye."

"But, lad, it'll be soon."

"Mam," he whispered, "closer."

Nance bent her head.

"Mam—ye—are a darlin', an'—I'll—no—forget."

Every word came more faintly.

"Lad, lad," plead Nance, "quick, now!"

Silvan cast one imploring look at Nance, and his lips struggled for speech, then his gaze slipped away like a light withdrawing into deep woods.

Coming down the lane sounded the tread of many feet. Nance heard the steps approaching; she rose, shook the tears from her eyes, and closed the bedroom door behind her. Already the latch had been lifted and her neighbours were filing in, the men taking off their caps and making way for the women. Nance, confronting them, leaned against the door frame.

"Och, dear," said Dolly compassionately, "he's gone already."

There was no reply.

"Were his last words——" asked Megan.

"Aye," answered Nance, her voice courageous, proud, "aye, these words: 'In the shadow of Thy wings I will rejoice.'"

UNWIN BROTHERS, LIMITED, THE GRESHAM PRESS, WOKING AND LONDON.

RETURN TO ⟶ **CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT**
202 Main Library

LOAN PERIOD 1 **HOME USE**	2	3
4	5	6

ALL BOOKS MAY BE RECALLED AFTER 7 DAYS

Renewals and Recharges may be made 4 days prior to the due date.

Books may be Renewed by calling 642-3405.

DUE AS STAMPED BELOW

AUG 22 1988

AUTO DISC AUG 13 '88

FORM NO. DD6,

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY
BERKELEY, CA 94720

YB 33363

U.C. BERKELEY LIBRARIES

C005387406